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PREFACE

I am offering here a collection of my articles on studies in Sanskrit Drama. Some of them are my papers read at the different sessions of the All India Oriental Conference, some written for special numbers and/or published in the volumes of Oriental Research Journals, some are lectures/talks at the particular seminars; and some are written specially for this collection. My endeavour is to bring to the readers some perspective or view-point on different problems connected with the Sanskrit plays. While respecting the traditional approach to Sanskrit studies and examining the plays in the light of Sanskrit dramatic theory, I have also thought it desirable to look upon them as pure literature, as works of literary art; and so, to appreciate them better, I have tried, at places, to bring in a comparative outlook from Western literary principles. The essays in the last section are theoretical; and here, I have tried to interpret the theory as closely and correctly as possible, taking cue from master like Abhinavagupta, and attempted at solving some theoretical puzzles. Some readers may not agree with the views and opinions expressed in these essays; but it is my sincere hope that the essays will stimulate re-thinking on some of the problems arising from a study of Sanskrit Drama.

I am aware that some views and opinions are repeated in this writing. That is so because the topics are inter-connected and the problems are inter-related. I have allowed the repetition to make the article self-sufficient and spare the reader the annoyance of cross references; while doing so, I have taken care, I believe to deal fully with a particular problem in a separate article devoted to it, and summarised the main ideas or paraphrased them when a reference to them was inevitable in another article.

My particular thanks are due to Mr. Balwant, the enterprising and enthusiastic person and proprietor of Ajanta Books International, Delhi, for bringing out this volume for students and scholars of Indology.

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1

SVAPNAVĀSAVADATTA : PLOT AND PLOT-CONSTRUCTION

[1]

What is the plot of Svapnavāsavadatta ? The title of the play suggests a theme which is psychological. In an important scene in Act V, Udayana gets a vision of Vāsavadattā and, as a result, becomes quite sceptical of her reported tragic death. There is no doubt that the so-called death of Vāsavadattā contributes the significant motive to the plot. Not only that. There are other factors which seem to work in the same direction. The mode of the characterisation of Udayana and Vāsavadattā is truly psychological. Particularly, the conflict in the mind of Udayana, his vacillations between Vāsavadattā and Padmāvatī are spread over the entire length of the play. They are like an ever-recurring refrain of a song. This does not, however, mean that there are no other dramatic motives present. In fact, they are equally powerful. The minister Yaugandharāyaṇa unfolds the machinery of a political design in the opening Act of the play with a view to restoring Udayana back to his lost kingdom. This is a motive which also cannot be ignored. The play, thus, appears to contain a conflict of motives. Is it a study in psychology or is it a political theme that is presented in the play ? A clear answer to the question is not possible without a careful analysis.

[2]

Let us consider first the political aspect of the theme. From this point of view the plot of the play would appear to be the

restoration of Udayana to his ancestral throne. The origin of this motive lies in the past. 'King Udayana is fond of sport,' writes Dr. Sarup,[1] 'and is too much attached to the society of his beloved queen Vāsavadattā. He neglects his affairs of the state. A strong and watchful enemy Āruṇi takes advantage of the situation and inflicts defeat after defeat on Udayana who loses the greater part of his kingdom and retires to a frontier village Lāvāṇaka... The minister's unbounded devotion to Udayana rouses him to retrieve the situation so as to restore the king to his ancestral throne.'

There are some initial difficulties for carrying out of this motive :

(i) Under the present circumstances it was impossible to fight against the powerful enemy without reinforcements, without military help. The king of Magadha could be approached but he would not naturally be induced to stir unless a powerful factor, as that of relationship, were to prevail. In other words, a matrimonial alliance with the king of Magadha was a first necessity.

(ii) And for the matrimonial alliance, Vāsavadattā was doubly an obstacle. Udayana loved Vāsavadattā to such an extent that he would never wed another woman as long as Vāsavadattā was alive. And king Darśaka also would not offer his sister to Udayana till he was genuinely assured of his loving response. Thus, the sacrifice of Vāsavadattā was necessary in the interests of the state.[2]

(iii) There was yet another difficulty. When the plan that Yaugandharāyaṇa had conceived would be consummated, the restoration of Vāsavadattā to Udayana would be a hard question to face. In the first place, Vāsavadattā's character must remain above suspicion. Udayana might refuse to take Vāsavadattā back suspecting her purity during the period of separation. It would, therefore, be necessary to furnish convincing proof of the chastity of the queen during her absence. Secondly, Vāsavadattā and Padmāvatī might not get on well together which would make their lives and consequently the life of Udayana miserable. This unpleasantness must be avoided.

Yaugandharāyaṇa tides over these difficulties with the help

of a brilliant strategy. The marriage of Udayana with Padmāvatī presents no big problem to him because that has been already predicted by the soothsayers.[3] But to separate Udayana and Vāsavadattā, Yaugandharāyaṇa persuades Vāsavadattā to go into disguise and remain incognito till the whole plan is successful. In making Vāsavadattā an accomplice in the plot, Yaugandharāyaṇa has surely counted on Vāsavadattā's great love for Udayana and her earnest desire to win back the lost glory for her dear husband.[4] Vāsavadattā being taken into the plot, Yaugandharāyaṇa disguises himself as an ascetic, Vāsavadattā is dressed as an Āvantikā, and both leave Lāvāṇaka under cover of secrecy. In the meanwhile, Vāsavadattā's palace is set on fire, and a report is raised that Vāsavadattā and Yaugandharāyaṇa are burnt in the fire. Udayana is shocked and becomes disconsolate. Rumaṇvān plays a sympathetic hypocrite and takes Udayana out of Lāvāṇaka.

For the solution of the third difficulty Fate lends a helping hand. A lucky event, described in Act I, brings Yaugandharāyaṇa and Vāsavadattā to Padmāvatī. Yaugandharāyaṇa immediately decides to throw the two women together. Vāsavadattā as an Āvantikā is to remain in the care of Padmāvatī as her ward. Constant companionship will tend to make them friends. And at the time of restoration Padmāvatī will be able to convince Udayana of the purity of Vāsavadattā.[5]

This clever plan now works of itself. In the opening Act the initial objectives are achieved. The second Act reports Udayana's arrival in Magadha, the third his marriage with Padmāvatī, the fourth and a good part of the fifth describe the scenes of Udayana's new family life. At the close of the fifth Act we learn that all arrangements for the fight have been made, the rear is guarded and the combined armies of Udayana and king Darśaka have crossed the Ganges. Udayana is asked to shake off his gloom and lead the armies. Udayana rises with a firm resolve.[6] The final Act shows Udayana established on his throne. Then follows the general clarification of the whole mystery.

Considered this way the plot of the play shows a strong political colour. It is, however, possible to take some objections against this view:

(*a*) It may be granted that the restoration of Udayana is a political motive. Yaugandharāyaṇa's brilliant strategy wears the same aspect too. But then is it not rather strange that nearly four out of the six Acts, *viz*., II, III, IV and V, are completely silent about the unfolding and the development of the political plan ? If the central motive is political only it is reasonable to expect that it figures prominently.

To this objection a twofold answer could be given :

(i) When Yaugandharāyaṇa placed Vāsavadattā in the care of Padmāvatī he justifiably felt that he had achieved half the success of his plot. There was no doubt in his mind that things were turning out exactly according to his plan.[7] Since Vāsavadattā was taken into confidence she could be thoroughly depended on to guard her incognito till the time was ripe for revelations.[8] And once she was with Padmāvatī the question of her restoration was as good as solved. Further, when the palace was set on fire the expected reaction on Udayana could be relied upon. It was necessary to take Udayana out of Lāvāṇaka and direct his steps towards Magadha, and Rumaṇvān could be trusted to carry that out. The marriage of Udayana with Padmāvatī presented, as already seen, no difficulty. Thus, Yaugandharāyaṇa has considered every possibility of the developing situation and he believes that he has set the political machine working in such a sure way that, once the initial momentum is given (as he does in Act I by depositing Vāsavadattā with Padmāvatī), it will of itself continue to rotate bringing about the desired revolutions. Yaugandharāyaṇa's disappearance in Act I and the silence of the following Acts is, therefore, based on a justifiable confidence in the smooth working of the plan.

(ii) And further, it may be pointed out that the interval of Acts II to V is necessary for the maturing of the events which lead to the attack on the enemy Āruṇi. Some good time must reasonably be allowed for Udayana to get over the shock of Vāsavadattā's reported death, his coming to Magadha, his engagement to and marriage with Padmāvatī and the readiness of king Darśaka to offer the military help fostered by this new bond of kinship.

(*b*) It is possible perhaps to take another objection that what happens actually before our eyes and which is present throughout the play hardly savours of political action. The political motive works, if at all, in the background and the picture is rather of domestic events : the first meeting in the Dharmāraṇya, the betrothal and marriage of Padmāvatī, the scene in the Mādhavī-latā-maṇdapa, the dream-vision in the Samudragṛha, and the final scene of revelations in the palace of Udayana are all natural domestic scenes. Is it then correct to characterise the play by something that happens in the background ?

This objection is very substantial. A provisional answer to it could again be twofold :

(i) It is true that the political motive works behind scenes. Yet its solidity and reality is never mistaken. It gradually unfolds itself and appears to be spread on the entire length of the play. The consciousness of the political plot is generally present. And when in Acts II, III, IV and V it seems to become very sluggish and almost lost sight of, Vāsavadattā drops a significant hint ;[9] and then the memory of it comes with a crash at the close of Act V with the cry of the battle. Thus, the political motive is not the kind of background that only contributes to or heightens the main picture ; rather, it is the picture that owes its life to the background.

(ii) Further, it could be said that Bhāsa abstained from treating the political motive as a visual central theme by the consideration, first, of the improbability of putting such scenes on the stage ; and second, by the technical prohibition regarding the depicting of some scenes on the stage. This latter, it must be confessed, is not a very powerful argument, because, as the general opinion goes Bhāsa might have been quite unaware of any such technical rules on dramaturgy. But the other argument does possess a force, In the case of such scenes as the fire at Lāvāṇaka, the grief of Udayana, the actual celebrations of the marriage and the scenes of battle, the real difficulty of staging some of these and the artistic considerations about the undramatic nature of others could be responsible for the treatment given by Bhāsa. It might be expected that 'The Spectacular' would have a limited scope on

the ancient stage after all.

Some more considerations might now be set in favour of the view that plot of the play is a political theme :

(i) It is not possible to deny the importance of the minister's plot and of the clever political strategy that he puts into action.

(ii) The play opens with the initial stage of political plan which is worked out in Act I. The final Act shows the winding up of the scattered threads in a scene of general revelations.

(iii) The very disguise of Vāsavadattā, in which she is present before us throughout, is motivated by the polical plan.

(iv) The appearance of Yaugandharāyaṇa in the first and the last Acts, far from being strange, is actually significant. He comes to initiate the action, to set the machine going, and reappears to wind it up. Though he is absent otherwise his presence is generally felt throughout the play. For he is the real Sūtradhāra of the show, all other characters, including Vāsavadattā and Udayana, are conscious or unconscious accomplices and tools in his hands.

[3]

When all that could be said in favour of this view has been done it still remains an open question whether conviction is finally reached. It is indubitable that the main characters of the play are thrown together as they have been done by a motive which is political. Further, there are references here and there to the success of the various phases of the political plan. Yet it is true that these references are far too scanty to make the play a political one. It would not do to merely deduce the central theme from the political design. It is absolutely necessary to colour it with such scenes and events as leave no doubt about its nature. Occasional announcements and unexpected cries can never succeed in carrying home a particular theme. The drama *Mudrā-Rākṣasa* is an illuminating instance in point. Contrasted with it the play of Bhāsa would

appear to be a timid failure if the political theme is insisted on.

It looks, therefore, that an emphasis in the wrong direction has been unnecessarily given. Granting the weight and the importance of the whole set of arguments put forth above, it nevertheless becomes difficult to deny the general impression that the play conveys to us. As suggested it depicts a series of domestic scenes which are suffused with psychological colours. The very human and acute struggle in the mind of Vāsavadattā leaves behind a deep impression. The humiliation in the guise of Āvantikā to which she has nobly surrendered, the agonising way she bears her lonely sorrow of separation and of the misery of Udayana's second marriage which she has to eye-witness, the reassuring comfort of Udayana's conscious (Act IV) and sub-conscious (Act V) confessions of love... all these are too vivid to be ignored. The same is true of Udayana : The shocking effect of the news of Vāsavadattā's death reported in Act I, and his loving obsession for Vāsavadattā that is painted in Acts IV, V and VI with ever-renewed colours have a solid reality about them. Even a casual reader of the play cannot miss this impression. It appears that a political crisis made the play possible. But once the main characters were thrown together Bhāsa was more interested in working out their psychological reactions so as to present a fascinating picture of a domestic crisis in a royal household ; and he left the reactions to the political design to work themselves out almost mechanically. Dr. Sarup who seems to favour the former view has also to admit that 'the play presents a profound psychological study.'[10] This is of course true. The contention, however, goes beyond this admission. Bhāsa's handling of the theme and the deliberate dramatic treatment of the same have made the play just a social picture.

It is not possible to draw always a forceful argument from the title of the play. The title is dictated by the interest or fancy of the author and there is no rule that it should inevitably be representative of the central theme. Even then, if the title is some indication of the author's inclinations, *Svapnavāsavadatta* would favour the view more of psychological study ; and in this way only it could get a correct signficance.

From the point of view of orthodox criticism this view might be thought inadmissible. It might be urged that the psychological approach is very modern. But this argument is beside the point. There is no God's law that ancient works of art should not be judged by new and newer standards if such an examination helps to uncover many a hidden source of artistic delight and tends towards a truer understanding and a better appreciation of the work of art. Moreover, do we not speak of the 'profound knowledge of human psychology' on the part of Kālidāsa, Shakespeare and such other writers ?

What then is the plot of the play ? Is it the political plan concerned with Udayana's restoration ? or is it a poetical and psychological representation of the conflict in the mind of Udayana which centres on the reported death of Vāsavadattā and which is resolved only after her restoration to him ? To my mind there is some truth in both the views and probably the best interpretation would be to sum up the truth in both. I would, therefore, re state the plot of the play as follows :

Svapnavāsavadatta *is concerned with two restorations : That of* Udayana *to his lost throne and that of* Vāsavadattā *to her husband.*

The first is mainly a political and the second mainly a psychological issue. But the two restorations are quite interrelated and derive from one another mutual sustenance. The political motive is a powerful background and the main picture is a vivid study in a psychological crisis.

Enough has been said about the political issue in the play. The importance of the second cannot be minimised. The sacrifice of Vāsavadattā was necessary for the success of the political objective. But her restoration presented no less a big problem to Yaugandharāyaṇa. All his utterances in Act I clearly show his great anxiety not to sacrifice the love between Udayana and Vāsavadattā to realise the mere political ambition. His devotion to Udayana is too obvious. But he fully realises from the way Udayana loves Vāsavadattā that Udayana would any day prefer his beloved wife to the lost kingdom. This knowledge together with the trust that Udayana places in him would never allow Yaugandharāyaṇa to raise the political issue above the fact of love. Further, his concern for

Vāsavadattā as displayed in Act I is quite genuine. She has already obliged him by consenting to be a party to his political plot. And so when she is worried over the humiliations entailed by her disguise Yaugandharāyaṇa hastens to console and cheer her up by wise philosophical observations. It cannot be said that this is only an attempt to flatter and please Vāsavadattā with a view to avoiding impediments in the political plot. Such an interpretation would, in the first place, be very mean and unjust to Yaugandharāyaṇa ; secondly, it is an open fact that his political ambition is wholly selfless. His anxious solicitude for Vāsavadattā as for Udayana has, therefore, to be acknowledged as prompted by a genuine emotion of affection. Hence the responsibility he takes upon himself. This sense of responsibility that Yaugandharāyaṇa evinces is aptly rewarded by the confidence that Vāsavadattā places in him.[11] It is thus necessary to remember that all Yaugandharāyaṇa's actions, initiated though by political motive, are moulded and modified by the considerations of the royal love. Further, the depositing of Vāsavadattā with Padmāvatī is meant to make her restoration smooth, sure and safe. Finally, the strongest argument for the psychological view is derived from Act VI, wherein the second restoration is effected. The entire Sixth Act would be meaningless were it not to serve this purpose of restoring Vāsavadattā to Udayana.

[4]

The whole dramatic action which is spread over six Acts is now to be considered in details. The attempt is to discover all the several elements of plot-building and to assess their respective worth from literary and aesthetic points of view.

A structural examination of the play at once reveals that Acts I and VI, II and III, and IV and V bear striking mutual similarities.

Acts I and VI are in the first place (*a*) crowded with characters as contrasted with the remaining Acts which are managed with comparatively a few characters ; secondly (*b*) a number of incidents take place in these two Acts—Padmāvatī's

visit to the Queen Mother, her halt in the holy Forest, the announcement of gifts, the co-incidental arrival of Yaugandharāyaṇa and Vāsavadattā, Padmāvatī's acceptance of the 'deposit,' the arrival and narration of the student about the fire at Lāvāṇaka in Act I; and in Act VI, the whole set of circumstances that lead to the discovery of the lute and to the final restoration of Vāsavadattā which is worked up in progressive steps. (*c*) The reason for this crowding of characters and incidents is not far to seek. The action which is prepared and sowed in the first Act is consummated and gathered in the sixth. It is interesting to note further that just as a previous preparation is made to initiate the action in Act I by devising the strategy of Yaugandharāyaṇa, even so in Act VI a preparation is made to wind up the action by devising the discovery of the lute.

Acts II and III are (*a*) the shortest in the play, (*b*) contain only prose dialogue without a single verse which is very peculiar for a Sanskrit Drama, (*c*) and by way of plot-development achieve very little indeed. Act II which shows Padmāvatī playing with a ball gives the news of Udayana's arrival in Magadha and his engagement to Padmāvatī. Act III depicting a scene of preparing a wedding garland by Vāsavadattā indicates the celebration of the marriage. These two Acts are so small and so static that their existence as separate Acts seems to be doubtful. It could have been possible in the interest of swift movement to put the betrothal and the marriage just in a sort of prelude and to catch up with the central theme. But Bhāsa chose otherwise, and quite positively in psychological interest. It is quite probable that the difficulty of putting the two scenes on one background and the absence of the technique of several scenes to an Act led the author to raise these two small scenes to the dignity of Acts. However, even as they stand, they are quite interesting for the psychological reactions of Vāsavadattā which are very minutely drawn and which, but for these two Acts, would have been definitely missed.

Acts IV and V again resemble one another a great deal : (*a*) Both depict domestic scenes around about the palace in Magadha, one in Pramadavana, the other in Samudragṛha.

(*b*) Both show situations which seem to be deliberately created. While the meeting in Samudragṛha is consciously planned by skilfully withdrawing all other characters and allowing Vāsavadattā and Udayana almost to run into one another, the meeting in Pramadavana, apparently accidental though, is yet planned with a full knowledge of a very probable meeting. The Vidūṣaka expects to find Padmāvatī in Pramadavana and, therefore, knowingly directs Udayana to the place.[12] (*c*) In both these Acts the author creates a possibility of an encounter of Udayana and Vāsavadattā and thus leads on to a fine dramatic suspense which he resolves by a clever device in Act IV, by making the ladies hide behind a bower and giving finally Vāsavadattā an opportunity to escape; and in Act V by sending Udayana to sleep and thus avoiding for the second time the disclosure of Vāsavadattā. (*d*) Naturally in both these Acts the dominating interest is psychological which is heightened by a suspense present in the dramatic irony of the whole situation. (*e*) Finally, it is worth noting that the principal figure here is that of Udayana. The psychological actions and reactions of all characters, including those of Udayana, are focussed on one effect, namely, the revival and the strengthening of the memory of Vāsavadattā.

These structural resemblances, very striking and at the same time very peculiar as they are, show a deliberate constructive skill. They are an evidence of the powers of Bhāsa for dramatic construction.

It is necessary now to assess the literary and artistic value of this structural aspect. For this purpose it is best to tackle the problem from another side. In the construction of a dramatic action which is spread over a number of Acts, every dramatist has to create and employ small or big situations. It is through these situations or events that the dramatic action moves towards the desired progress. They are like pillars which support and beautify the edifice of the plot. An attempt to understand these necessary and important elements of a drama is like appraising the design from the inside as it were.

The dramatic situations, then, that Bhāsa has created are

as follows in the order of their occurrence :

(1) The introduction of the Brahmachārin (Act I).

(2) The encounter in Pramadavana (Act IV).

(3) The dream-vision (Act V).

(4) The gradual revelation of Vāsavadattā (Act VI).

[5]

Through the introduction of the Brahmachārin Bhāsa achieves the purpose of reporting the incidents at Lāvāṇaka, namely, the fire, the supposed burning of Vāsavadattā and Yaugandharāyaṇa, the colossal grief of Udayana and the care taken by Rumaṇvān. This narration, colourful as it is, is full of dramatic irony also because Yaugandharāyaṇa and Vāsavadattā who are reported to be burnt are actually present in disguise among the party of attentive listeners. The situation is, thus, essential, interesting and effective.

But it raises an issue : Is Bhāsa justified in putting the whole narration in the mouth of a Brahmachārin ? Apparently the necessary purpose could have been served by bringing in any other character as well. Besides, it seems to offend against the law of probability too. Is it quite natural for a celibate student to observe so carefully and report so emotionally the love and the sorrow of separation of a profound lover ? The boy gives a very colourful narration. He also makes personal observations on the depth of Udayana's love and gives a compliment to Vāsavadattā.[13] All this talk, this praise of the glory of love, sounds rather awkward in the mouth of a Vedic student.

The objection has definitely a force. But is is not difficult to discover the reasons for Bhāsa's preference :

(*i*) The scene of the Act is laid in a forest. If the introduction of a character were to be natural and probable such a one ought to be either an old hermit or a wandering traveller. A civilian would be clearly inconsistent with the picture and his introduction would demand a justification, which, in view of the small immediate purpose of the narration would seem hardly worth the fuss. It is necessary to remember that Bhāsa has already explained the presence of Padmāvatī and her retinue by the motive of her visit to the Queen Mother. And

the entry of Vāsavadattā and Yaugandharāyaṇa can be easily understood as they are proceeding in the disguise of an ascetic and his sister to Padmāvatī : The way to Rājagṛha was probably through the same forest; or, disguised as an ascetic, Yaugandharāyaṇa probably thought of going to the Tapovana first and in the tranquility and the security of the atmosphere there evolve his plan; and in the meanwhile luck favoured him.

Now to the two possibilities : As already suggested the entry of a wandering traveller would require an explanation though not of his wandering in the forest surely of the cause of the wandering itself, which is a needless complication. But an old ascetic would perhaps have done. If so, it is really doubtful how far impressive his report would have been. A Tāpasa devoted to spiritual problems and already uninterested in the practical issues of life would, in the nature of things, not take the calamity of Udayana so seriously. He would be inclined more to treat it as inevitable and would be tempted to philosophise over it, though he would certainly narrate the bare facts of the case. The report, therefore, will be underlined by his philosophical outlook.[14] But what is needed in the present case is not philosophising over the occurrence and fact of death but rather a vivid and an emotional narration. For, we know that the news is to have a profound effect on Vāsavadattā who reads in Udayan's tremendous sorrow an assurance of his abiding love for her. The narration is intended to affect Padmāvatī also who, as a consequence, is drawn nearer towards Udayana. Further, the audience too must be impressed and convinced by the narration. It is plain, therefore, that the desired effect on the characters present and on the audience can be more surely achieved by a sentimental rather than by a matter-of-fact philosophical narration.

(*ii*) For this purpose of emotional dramatic effect the choice of a young boy will appear to be very appropriate. Such a sensitive mind is apt to be deeply stirred by the tragic death and the profound sorrow. The colourful description of the boy only shows how the event has profoundly affected his

subconscious mind. From that subconsciousness have arisen the references to the *Cakravākas* and other bereaved lovers. The boy is unable to find a parallel ! His compliment to Vāsavadattā is the logical result of his actual and mental observations. His narration, thus, is quite consistent with his psychology and that it impresses the listeners with the desired effect is obvious.

(ii) As regards the moral aspect of the issue, it must be remembered that there is nothing in the demeanour of the boy that does not speak of his moral and shy nature. As he enters he tries to withdraw his steps on unexpectedly seeing the ladies. It is only when he is assured and put at his ease that he moves forward.[15] If then, his talk about love is considered as morally objectionable, one must say that it is a very wrong attitude to take. The boy is a human being and he can certainly be aware of the emotion of love ! What is really important is that the attitude and the talk of the boy do not show the slightest trace of an *abhilāṣā* which at once could have been objectionable. There is nothing awkward if he only shows a dispassionate understanding which is illumined by *karuṇā* or sympathy. Further, his talk has burst out of him by an entirely unexpected and tremendous event which has completely taken him in. His references to forlorn lovers and his general observations may have been derived, for ought we know, from the poetry and the legends that he read as a student and not from anything like personal knowledge. The mention of the conventional *cakravāka* and the vague allusion to 'others torn from their illustrious wives' are definitely more bookish than actual. That the study of poetry and legends formed part of the ancient curriculum is a fact beyond dispute. Even a sober and innocent girl like Anasūyā infers the fact of Sakuntalā's love-sickness from the testimony of her bookish knowledge.[16]

I think, therefore, that the narration by the student is perfectly justified. And it is, under the circumstances as pointed out, more effective in achieving its intended psychological purpose in the interest of further dramatic development.

[6]

The main scene of the fourth Act takes place in Pramadavana where Padmāvatī has gone to see her favourite blossoms along with her maid and Vāsavadattā. The Vidūṣaka brings Udayana also to Pramadavana to divert his melancholy. The two parties are moving, no doubt, in different parts of the Pramadavana. Padmāvatī who has arrived before the king is near the Mādhavīmaṇḍapa, and the conversation of the three ladies turns naturally from the beauty of the flowers to Udayana, a topic which is very pleasant to both Padmāvatī and Vāsavadattā, though, of course, for slightly different reasons. As the ladies are near the bower, the Vidūṣaka and Udayana arrive. The ladies are now blocked. They cannot move out lest they be seen. And then, Vāsavadattā will be exposed. But it is absolutely necessary to preserve Vāsavadattā's incognito in the interest of the dramatic action. Having brought the situation to verge of exposure Bhāsa saves it very cleverly by resorting to a very simple and natural device. Padmāvatī knows that Vāsavadattā avoids the sight of a *parapuruṣa;* and so, out of regard for her sentiments, she nobly resists the temptation of meeting Udayana and decides to enter the bower.[17]

Now it so happens that the Vidūṣaka directs Udayana to the same bower ! This he does under a simple and natural impulse. A comfort-loving person like the Vidūṣaka should indeed find the heated slab of stone unbearable and hence make a suggestion to move in the shady bower.[18] What is going to happen now ? The unexpected meeting must not be allowed to take place. But at the same time there is nothing to prevent Udayana and the Vidūṣaka from entering into the bower. Bhāsa uses again a very clever device. The maid who is aware of Padmāvatī's anxiety to save Āvantikā from getting into an embarrassing situation shakes the *Sephālikā* creeper and releases a swarm of bees. The Vidūṣaka is frightened and immediately steps back. And the king is not presently in a mood to punish the bees and secure an entrance into the bower according to the Vidūṣaka's suggestion. For, the lovelorn Udayana has become sentimentally sympathetic towards

the bees and wishes to let them enjoy the company of their beloved, a pleasure that has been denied to Udayana himself.[19] And the encounter is once more saved. The last device, however, is solely based on Udayana's sentimental mood and, though rather weak from the structural point of view, it once again shows how Bhāsa was interested in the psychological aspect of the plot more than anything else.

After this, however, is developed a situation which in point of suspense and dramatic irony is, indeed, on a high level. The ladies, as we know, are blocked inside the bower and the Vidūṣaka and Udayana have seated themselves at the entrance. How long is the state to continue ? But as if to heighten the suspense Bhāsa makes the Vidūṣaka open up a drawling and delicate topic of conversation : He asked Udayana as to whom be loves more, Vāsavadattā or Padmāvatī ? This is very interesting and intriguing. For, while Udayana and the Vidūṣaka are completely unaware of the presence of the ladies in the bower, the question is so personal that the hearts of Padmāvatī and Vāsavadattā are bound to jump ! Does the situation conceal any dramatic point ? I think it serves the following purposes :

(*i*) Apparently the question of the Vidūṣaka and the entire piece of conversation are idle. But the question is prompted by a genuine reason : The Vidūṣaka must have been rather surprised to find Udayana's mind still oppressed by the loss of Vāsavadattā of which he talked in his sentimental reference to the bees. While there was an immediate prospect of meeting the young and charming wife, if Udayana were to talk of *kāntā-viyoga* (see v. 3), the question which the Vidūṣaka asked was quite natural to come up. It moreover indicates Vidūṣaka's character for humour. His bold stand to force the answer from Udayana, his innate cowardice, the mock pacification on the part of Udayana, and then the repetition of the whole scene as Udayana turns the tables and himself plays the Vidūṣaka, all this develops a very interesting scene. The Vidūṣaka's comparative preference for Padmāvatī because she feeds him with sumptuous meals is again in the characteristic vein.

(*ii*) The situations provides the test of friendship between

Udayana and the Vidūṣaka. The unwilling king is forced to answer the question when the Vidūṣaka conjures him in the name of friendship (*Vayasabhāvena śapāmi*)

(*iii*) The entire conversation and the scene that develops has a profound effect on all the people concerned. Udayana, once more reminded of Vāsavadattā's death, is completely distracted and is driven on the verge of tears. His obsession for Vāsavadattā returns. It is obvious that Bhāsa wants to continue harping on this note which was apparently drowned in the celebrations of Udayana's second marriage, that is to say, in the events which have occupied the second and the third Acts. This is quite necessary because the dramatic action has to move gradually but surely to the second restoration. The first restoration, that of Udayana to his kingdom, is as good as accomplished since Udayana and King Darśaka are closely related and the question of his military help is a matter of time only. But in these general revelries the memory of Vāsavadattā has not to be allowed to perish. Bhāsa definitely served this purpose with the help of the present scene.

Vāsavadattā on her part is assured by the confession of Udayana's abiding love. It is a sort of a consolation in her lonely sufferings, a consolation that she deserves by virtue of her selfless sacrifice.

The effect of this scene on Padmāvatī is not immediately noticeable. But in the Praveśaka of the following Act we learn of her headache. It is very compelling to believe that the confessions of Udayana which she tried to stand bravely and the outward effect of which she suppressed, have had their sub-conscious effect which resulted in her headache. The situation thus paves the way for a psychological development on which the following Act is based.

(*iv*) Finally, the situation gives Vāsavadattā an opportunity to escape without being noticed by Udayana. It is natural that Udayana who is terribly moved should bury his tearful face in his garment, and it is also natural that the Vidūṣaka should run to fetch water for Udayana to wash his face. This is just the opportunity for Vāsavadattā. Bhāsa thus provides a way not only to dissolve the awkward situation of blockade but also for saving the imminent contingency of Vāsavadattā's exposure.

[7]

If one were to judge by the title the scene of the dream-vision in the fifth Act should appear to be the most important one. A preliminary intimation of the expected situation is given in the Praveśaka by indicating (*i*) the fact of the headache of Padmāvatī, (*ii*) that her bed is arranged in Samudragṛha, (*iii*) and by making arrangements to convey the news to Vāsavadattā and Udayana. The whole possibility of the dream scene is founded on these three things which are reported through the conversation of two palace-maids.

The headache of Padmāvatī proceeds from a natural psychological cause as we have already seen. Bhāsa has evidenced great skill in utilizing this motif to build up the entire Act ; for, were it not for this indisposition of Padmāvatī, Udayana and Vāsavadattā would not have run to the Samudragṛha and the dream scene would not have occurred. It is, therefore, rather surprising that having unearthed this subtle, psychological device Bhāsa speaks no more about it in the remaining portion of the Act. Those who are interested in Padmāvatī will be rather disappointed as they are left to themselves to imagine what happened of her headache afterwards. The author has no time for it in the development of the dream scene and in the final winding up of the Act amid the loud cry of the battle. It is probable that Bhāsa was more interested in the psychological reactions of yet another meeting between Vāsavadattā and Udayana, and having assured himself of it through the means of Padmāvatī's headache he refused to bother himself any further about it.

It seems that there is a similar vagueness about the second point. With Padmāvatī's temporary illness Bhāsa has surely created a situation in which the two Queens and Udayana shall come together. This is what would have normally happened under the circumstances. But Bhāsa throws one more stick into the game or rather pulls one stick away : Padmāvatī does not go to Samudragṛha at all ! The author is quite silent about this unexpected development. However, it is possible to offer an explanation. The maid who sent Vāsavadattā and Udayana to Samudragṛha acted in doing so

on her own responsibility trusting that Padmāvatī would repair to that spot as perhaps was her usual practice, even though she had no definite information of that kind.[20] This explanation would do. But the fact is that there *was* a bed put up in the Samudragṛha. And from Udayana's description of the same (v. 4) it appears that the bed was freshly made. Obviously some one (and who else but Padmāvatī) was expected to go and lie there. Padmāvatī's failure to turn up in Samudragṛha must, therefore, be accounted for by a different reasoning. It could be attributed to royal whim or better, to the fact that Padmāvatī felt so restless as much (or little) by physical as by mental pain that she gave up the idea of going to the Samudragṛha and lay down in her own chamber in the palace. Probably she had not asked for either Vāsavadattā or Udayana to be sent to her. There is yet another possibility that the visitors arrived rather too early in their concern for the patient, and before Padmāvatī was taken to the Samudragṛha the event described in the Act happened and Vāsavadattā hurriedly left off.

The third point, however, is quite genuine and convincing. Even if the maid had acted on her own responsibility in conveying the news to Vāsavadattā and Udayana, she was perfectly justified in doing so. She honestly hoped that the presence of Udayana and Vāsavadattā would help Padmāvatī to divert her mind from her pain : That Udayana should be able to cheer up his ailing wife is so natural. But Vāsavadattā also could help Padmāvatī in her own way by amusing her with charming stories.[21] It was thus with a natural anxiety for her mistress and the confidence of the desirable effect of the visits of Udayana and Vāsavadattā that the maid sent for them. How could she or any body else in the palace imagine that the time was not yet ripe for the meeting of Udayana and Vāsavadattā ? And though Vāsavadattā, or rather Āvantikā, was known to be shy of 'strangers' the maid had neither the time nor the coolness (if she had the intelligence and the knowledge) to think of keeping her away from Udayana. For, all such considerations were merged in the dominating circumstance of the illness of her mistress.

The other details of the situation also are convincingly

worked out. The earlier arrival of the visitors is a probable accident. That Udayana should feel sleepy and after a time should actually fall asleep, that the Vidūṣaka should feel the cold of the evening and go away to fetch his shawl, that, in the meantime, a maid and Vāsavadattā should arrive there and that the maid should leave in a hurry to bring the soothing balm thus leaving her surely to run into Udayana, are all circumstances that can be easily understood as either natural or probable.

So once again the possibility of a meeting between Udayana and Vāsavadattā is created affording a situation replete with suspense. It appears that Bhāsa is consciously playing with this idea. When one knows that Udayana has come to stay in the Magadhan palace and when one remembers that Vāsavadattā is a ward and a companion of Padmāvatī, one realises that the chances of their meeting are ever present and real. But at the same time the author has to keep them apart for the success of the political plan. This avoidance, moreover, must not arouse the least suspicion as far at least as it pertains to Vāsavadattā. Thus the basic situation is innate with sure dramatic possibilities. And instead of avoiding the possibility of this encounter, Bhāsa actually rushes on towards it, creates a fine suspense and then cleverly saves the situation. This is indeed, a fine testimony to the positive skill in dramatic construction.

Already in Acts II and III Vāsavadattā is shown to be on the point of giving away her identity, but saving herself by a clever and convincing reply. The personal details about Udayana into which she has unconsciously entered in Act II she reports to have received from the people of Ujjayinī and, coming as she does from the same Province, Padmāvatī readily believes in her explanation.[22] In Act III Vāsavadattā absents herself from the marriage celebrations ; and her avoidance which could be scarcely noticed amid the huge hurry and flurry in the palace is not only natural but pathetically touching. In Act IV, the meeting, as we have already seen, has in a similar way been skilfully avoided. And now in Act V, when the meeting seems almost unavoidable Bhāsa prevents it by sending Udayana to sleep ! The revelation is yet to be withheld

because the time is not yet quite ripe ; and so, like the tears of the previous Act, the sleep of Udayana is a new trick of Bhāsa to save the situation. To my mind, this is the dramatic motive of the *svapna*.

The dream scene in itself, however, raises some doubts on the grounds of realism. The issue has been fully put and examined by Professor Gajendragadkar.[23] It is like this : Udayana goes to the Samudragṛha and finding a freshly made bed there goes to sleep. Vāsavadattā comes after a time and sits on the bed believing all the while that the sleeping person is Padmāvatī only. Now, is it not improbable ? Was Udayana's build and the general contour of his body so feminine that it did not arouse Vāsavadattā's suspicion ?

The answer to this 'serious defect in this otherwise very interesting scene' could be as follows :[24]

(i) We know that it was evening time. The visibility in the Samudragṛha was not good. It was responsible for the Vidūṣaka's mistaking the garland for the serpent.

(*ii*) The bed was specially arranged for an ailing person. It is common knowledge that in such a room the lamp is so placed or shaded as the light does not fall directly on the face of the patient.

(*iii*) It is almost certain that Udayana had completely covered himself with a blanket which he probably had drawn over his face. The Vidūṣaka's reference to the cold of the evening is quite significant in this connection. Further, it is likely that Udayana had turned his face away from the door as a sleeping person is usual to do. And whatever the position, it is not difficult to hear or observe the breathing of a sleeping person.

(*iv*) We must remember that Vāsavadattā enters with a worried mind. In such a mental state it is probable that she failed to notice things which ordinarily would not have escaped her attention.

(*v*) Not only that ; Vāsavadattā was told that Padmāvatī's bed was put up in the Samudragṛha. She entered, therefore, with a pre-possessed mind and there was no earthly reason for her to suspect *a priori* that some one else had slipped into the bed made for Padmāvatī. The moment Udayana starts talking

in his dream she realises her error and recoils with a shudder.

(*vi*) Finally, the whole situation ought to be judged by the Law of Probability as it operates in literary works. Rigorous and material standards of realism would surely make not only this or other scenes in this play, but many scenes in many other works, quite improbable.

The objection that is taken to the dream-talk of Udayana is to be similarly met. There is here a conversation between Udayana who is talking in his dream and Vāsavadattā who is obviously awake and is responding to the talk. Some of Udayana's questions seem to be linked up with the answers of Vāsavadattā. If it were really to be so, it would be natural to question the probability of such a 'continuous, consistent and intelligent' conversation.[25]

A detailed examination of 'the king's seven speeches,' however, shows that the objection is superficial. It is not correct to suppose that Udayana hears Vāsavadattā's answers. While there is nothing to prevent Vāsavadattā from hearing Udayana's words and making her own replies to them, what Udayana is doing is that he is talking to his dream creation of Vāsavadattā from whom he receives also dream-answers. The questions of Udayana have a bearing on these dream-answers only. The continuity and the consistency of the conversation are thus related to the dream-figure and not to the real Vāsavadattā who is seated by Udayana's side.

At one place it appears that Udayana's question has a reference to the previous answer of the real Vāsavadattā.

Rājā : Kim kupitā-si.

Vāsavadattā : Na hi, na hi, duḥkhitā-smi.

Rājā : Yadi akupitā, kimartham na alaṁkṛtā-si.

Vāsavadattā's denial seems to be connected with the next question. But a careful look into the dialogue shows that there is nothing of that sort. In the first place, the denial of the anger could very well have come from the dream-figure, as is really the case. Secondly, if Vāsavadattā's answer and denial were supposed to be heard by the sleeping person the most natural question to be asked next ought to be about the cause of sorrow (*Kimartha duḥkhitā-si*). That the sleeping person goes on talking about the 'ornaments' evidently indi-

cates the working of his mind on altogether different lines; and the next reference to 'Virachitā' strengthens this interpretation. Thirdly, the immediately preceding lines clearly show that the mind of the sleeping person is following its own train of thoughts.

Rājā : Hā Priye, hā priyaśiṣye, dehi me prativacanam.

Vāsavadattā : Ālapāmi Bhartaḥ, ālapāmi.

Rājā : Kim kupitā-si.

Udayana is anxious to make his dream-figure talk. Vāsavadattā's answer that she is speaking, if supposed to be heard by him and connected with his query, would make the question about her anger entirely irrelevant. For, the question presupposes that the dream-figure does not open her mouth and the sleeping person imagines that the cause of her silence is that she is angry.

It should further be pointed out that the very idea of the dream and particularly of the dream-talk need not be looked upon as absurd and unnatural. The unbearable sub-conscious pressure on the mind of Udayana should naturally look out for some relief which is sought in the temporary sleep. And I think that one should look at the dream-talk, considering Udayana's obsession, from the same point of view from which one looks at the somnambulism of Lady Macbeth.

[8]

The results of the battle announced at the close of the preceding Act are suggested in the Miśra-Viṣkambhaka of Act VI. Udayana regains his kingdom and is established in his Suyāmuna palace in Kauśāmbī. One restoration is over. The author now proceeds to the second restoration, that of Vāsavadattā, which he accomplishes through progressive steps.

(*i*) The first link in this restoration is the recovery of the lute Ghoṣavatī.

Bhāsa is very vague about this detail. He informs us that the lute was discovered on the banks of the river Narmadā. But this is a geographical impossibility since Narmadā is far away from Vatsa and Magadha. Professor Gajendragadkar attempts to solve this difficulty by venturing the conjecture

that 'the reading *Narmadātīre* is a corruption for *Yamunātīre*.' Kauśāmbī was situated on the Yamunā and so the recovery of the lute in the forest on the bank of the Yamunā could be probable.

But how did the lute go there ? In other words, how did it come to be lost at all ? Bhāsa is altogether silent about this point. Professor Gajendragadkar imagines that the lute was somehow lost when Udayana had to flee from Kauśāmbī to Lāvāṇaka following the attack of the enemy Āruṇi.[26] But is it probable that Udayana and Vāsavadattā should so much have lost their nerve, (on the assumption above), as to forget or leave behind the lute in their flight ? The lute was a divine gift to Udayana with which he tamed wild elephants, an art that was his monopoly ; besides, it was the witness of the romantic love that sprang between him and Vāsavadattā. Considering the psychology of artists it is difficult to accept the loss of the instrument which they are wont to prize above everything else. It is better, therefore, to assume that the lute was carried to Lāvāṇaka. If so, it is probable that Udayana believed it to be burnt along with Vāsavadattā in the fire and, therefore, never talked about it. This could explain the complete absence of any reference whatsoever to the lute in the first five Acts, till its surprising mention here. And then, as to the real loss of the lute, could we assume that it was not really lost at all but that Yaugandharāyaṇa managed through Rumaṇvān to keep it away, knowing full well that the sight of the *Veeṇā* dissociated from Vāsavadattā would only fan Udayana's grief ? Rumaṇvān could have seen to this arrangement. And afterwards when the time was ripe for uncovering the mystery, Yaugandharāyaṇa could have deliberately crept the lute near Udayana's palace and the person who played on it to attract Udayana's attention could have probably been the agent of Yaugandharāyaṇa. I think that this assumption that the loss of the lute was part of Yaugandharāyaṇa's general plan offers the best possible explanation under the circumstances.[27]

The recovery of the lute at this point of the story, however, serves a dramatic purpose. As already remarked it is the first step towards the second restoration. Udayana had by now

taken for granted the loss of Vāsavadattā, His mind was gradually drawn towards Padmāvatī. With this charming and devoted second wife, and now with the regaining of his lost kingdom, it would have been natural if Udayana completely reconciled himself to his new life and forgot Vāsavadattā altogether. The discovery of the lute forcibly renews the memory and leaves Udayana in a condition of mind which is very appropriate for the scene of Vāsavadattā's restoration which now follows.

(*ii*) The second step towards the second restoration is the arrival of Raibhya, the chamberlain of Mahāsena, and Vasundharā, the nurse of Vāsavadattā.

Raibhya brings from Mahāsena the message of congratulations on Udayana's recovery of his kingdom. Nothing can be more natural than this sentiment expressed by one king for another, both of whom also happen to be very closely related. Vasundharā brings a message from Vāsavadattā's mother. Thoroughly convinced of the great love between Udayana and their daughter, the parents were preparing to celebrate their marriage with due pomp. The elopement made it impossible. They had, therefore, to content themselves with performing the ceremony for the portraits of the young couple which were specially drawn for the occasion. Now, though Udayana has married again, the memory of the tragic death of Vāsavadattā would, the parents are convinced, always remain fresh in his mind. And so, reports Vasundharā, the queen has sent the very portrait to Udayana as a means of consolation in his sorrowful moods. Again a natural and noble sentiment.

The portrait and the presence of Vasundharā serve a double purpose. The portrait enables Padmāvatī to be aware of the fact that the picture of Vāsavadattā resembles very much Āvantikā who is staying with her and this leads to bringing out Āvantikā in the presence of all. But Vāsavadattā must have changed somewhat during all that period of separation and lonely suffering. Besides she had put on a disguise. This together with the commonly shared belief in her death would not lead to her immediate recognition. However, the nurse who had brought her up since she was a child would not fail to recognise her under any circumstances. This is just the

point. The presence of the nurse, therefore, is deliberately and for that reason skilfully arranged.

(*iii*) The third step is the entry of Padmāvatī. Her presence was absolutely necessary because but for her the resemblance between Vāsavadattā and Āvantikā would never have been brought to light; and if so, the scene of Vāsavadattā's restoration would not have followed.

It appears that Bhāsa is quite conscious of the importance of this link and is deliberately playing with it. Udayana sends for Padmāvatī as he wants to meet along with her the chamberlain and the nurse. Padmāvatī appears at the command of her husband. But as a shrewd girl she is sceptical about the effect of her presence on the relatives of Vāsavadattā. This is a very natural and human touch. Bhāsa creates a momentary suspense in the situation. If Udayana had agreed with this quite practical observation of Padmāvatī he would have interviewed the party alone ! The present of the portrait would have had its psychological effect on Udayana, but it would not have accomplished the step towards the restoration. As it happens Padmāvatī remains on the stage; for, Udayana removes the doubt in her mind by pointing out that the parents of Vāsavadattā look upon him as their son and, therefore, their affection would prevent them from not welcoming his second marriage ; and secondly, assured of their love for him, Udayana would be failing in his duty if he were to omit presenting his new wife to the elders as good conduct demanded.[28]

(*iv*) The next step is furnished by Padmāvatī's desire to see the portrait of Vāsavadattā to enable her to pay her salutations to her.

This desire is quite natural on the part of Padmāvatī. It reflects her respectful mind. At the same time it is necessary also, for her further observation about the resemblance is entirely based on the scrutiny of the picture. When Padmāvatī is convinced of her own surmise she reveals that a woman resembling Vāsavadattā is staying in that very palace with her.[29] Udayana at once demands that she be brought before him.

(*v*) The producing of Vāsavadattā and the arrival of

Yaugandharāyaṇa constitute the next step.

The bringing of Vāsavadattā was inevitable after the demand of Udayana. But Bhāsa like a clever craftsman is again playing with it to create a new suspense. Padmāvatī narrates the story of Āvantikā. Udayana feels that his secret hope of Vāsavadattā's survival has no foundation in fact. For, after all, it is not uncommon in the world to find two persons very closely resembling one another without there being any question of identity or blood-relationship between them.[30] One feels that Udayana would have no curiosity now to see the 'Brahmin's sister' and Vāsavadattā would not be brought on the stage after all. At this very moment Bhāsa introduces Yaugandharāyaṇa and dissolves the suspense.

There is no doubt that Yaugandharāyaṇa's presence is an important link in clarifying the mystery about Āvantikā. But a little thinking will show that as the situation is being developed the arrival of Yaugandharāyaṇa in itself could not have accomplished it. Yaugandharāyaṇa would have come as a Brahmin, demanded his deposit, Padmāvatī would have gladly returned the same; and with a sense of relief on her part[31] and with a sense of gratitude on the part of Yaugandharāyaṇa the whole thing would have been quietly over. What is absolutely necessary is to link up the 'deposit' with Vāsavadattā. This could not have happened on Yaugandharāyaṇas' arrival merely. For, in the first place, Padmāvatī is not a woman who would make a fuss about the deposit she accepted as a religious trust in virtue of her promise and thereby attempt to impress her husband by parading her truthfulness and piety. On the contrary, she is a very quiet girl and has a knack of doing even noble things in a silent manner. In Act I when the chamberlain seems to be making such a fuss over the acceptance of Āvantikā, Padmāvatī quietly steps forward and in a terse but decisive sentence points out that she will not go back on her words.[32] Then she expresses her desire to learn music from her husband but once; and noticing his silence gives up the point, judging for herself that she has not been able to replace Vāsavadattā.[33] She does not persist in her request. The way she expresses her love for her husband is also characteristically modest.[34] And finally,

we know that she has borne the suffering caused by Udayana's confessions of his love for Vāsavadattā in Act IV quite silently. From all these facts of her nature it is extremely unlikely that she would have returned the 'deposit' by drawing Udayana's attention to it and entered into the inevitable explanations which must evoke compliments to her piety, truthfulness and nobility. And even if she were to do so, Udayana's attitude as shown here clearly suggests that he would have remained rather indifferent. The moment he learns from Padmāvatī that Āvantikā is a Brahmin's sister all his curiosity and interest in her vanish and he beguiles his frustrated hope by self-expressed platitudes. And further, while returning the 'deposit' how was Padmāvatī to be aware of any definite connection between Āvantikā and Vāsavadattā? It is clear, therefore, that if Yaugandharāyaṇa were not to appear on the background described, the immediate production of Āvantikā on the stage could not have been so dramatically achieved. As it is, the dramatic, timely arrival of Yaugandharāyaṇa helps, as nothing else could have done, to bring Vāsavadattā forward. The idea of the resemblance between Āvantikā and Vāsavadattā is already in the air; and further, the presence of all people who have gathered there by a lucky coincidence makes the objective smoothly precipitate.

(*vi*) The final step in the restoration is achieved by the unveiling of Āvantikā.

Here Bhāsa probably encountered a difficulty. It was necessary to remove the veil which Vāsavadattā as a married woman wore. At the same time Bhāsa wanted to find out an artistic motive for doing so.[35] This could have been done perhaps by reminding Udayana once more of the resemblance and goading him on to get his curiosity satisfied. But Bhāsa had probably to withhold this simple device by the considerations of social propriety. The desire to see and unveil a married woman would have been both inappropriate and unrighteous on the part of Udayana.[36] It is also posible that Bhāsa wanted to create a fresh suspense at the last moment by encountering the possibility of Vāsavadattā's exit without the expected revelation. Anyway, the lifting of the veil and an artistic motive for doing so were necessary. And it appears

from the following dialogue that Bhāsa was rather confused here.

For what happens is this : Padmāvatī produces Āvantikā and requests the Brahmin to accept his 'deposit.' As Āvantikā moves forward, the nurse Vasundharā, recognises her to be Vāsavadattā. On which Udayana immediately addresses Āvantikā as 'Queen' and asks her to retire in the harem with Padmāvatī. To this strange command and hurry of Udayana the 'Brahmin' rejoins by confirming that Āvantikā is his sister. Udayana insists that she is Vāsavadattā. The 'Brahmin' then appeals to the noble lineage of Udayana and to his sense of royal duty. It is only then that Udayana commands to lift up the veil.[37]

I am quite sure that this little dialogue with its intriguing situation would be very interesting on the stage. But I also think that the confusion that has been created here cannot be accounted for in any convincing manner. What grounds has Udayana to address Āvantikā as 'Queen' and hurriedly ask her to retire into the harem ? Probably the remark of the nurse that she is Vāsavadattā. It is quite natural that Udayana should trust and prefer the testimony of the nurse to that of the stranger 'Brahmin.' But even then, where is the necessity of asking the woman to go back in the harem and of the argumentation with the 'Brahmin' ? Seeing the conflict of statements, Udayana could have straightway commanded for the unveiling and, implicitly trusting the evidence of the nurse as he did, he could have immediately disproved the 'Brahmin.' Moreover, there is an additional error in Udayana's procedure as indicated in the dialogue : While disbelieving the Brahmin Udayana is also unconsciously disbelieving Padmāvatī. Did not Padmāvatī produce Āvantikā as the very Brahmin's sister ? What reasom has Udayana to disregard Padmāvatī's evidence ? The confusion is simply inescapable. It would have been better if Udayana had stopped with '*Katham Mahāsenaputri*' and the following sentence were omitted. The previous dialogue clearly shows that Udayana had given up the hope of regaining Vāsavadattā almost completely. Consistent with this psychology, the observation of the nurse would produce a pleasant electric shock on his mind. The

feeling of flabbergastation and dismay that he was bound to experience, was appropriately expressed by the simple exclamation *Katham Mahāsenaputri*. The Brahmin, then, could have *opposed the nurse* by insisting that the woman was his sister and could also have appealed to the king not to deprive him of her. And Udayana also, acutely tickled in mind, could have given, in face of this conflict, the most natural order for removing the veil and deciding the identity of the women. To my mind this seems to be the most natural arrangement of the dialogue.

After the recognition of Vāsavadattā what remains is only a short explanation of her incognito and her stay with Padmāvatī. When that is given by Yaugandharāyaṇa the second restoration is complete.

[9]

It is now time to sum up our observations proceeding from the critical study. The first thing that has struck us is the power of Bhāsa to select an entirely human aspect of the story. He concentrates his attention on the psychological actions and reactions of his characters. Consequently the whole story acquires, as far as possible, an emotional value which brings the story from the world of misty romantic legend within the orbit of common human experience. The characters gain a sure air of realism and the drama becomes very appealing.

In managing his story too Bhāsa shows evident skill. The structural similarities of the various acts are noted. They show the determined use of positive construction in the building up of the plot. Further, we have seen how Bhāsa has an eye for creating situations which are full of dramatic interest. It is a credit to Bhāsa that no Act is without some interesting happening and nowhere does the interest seem to flag. Acts II and III where nothing really happens are, it is worthy of note, the shortest. And one wonders if Bhāsa visualised the possibility of mere conversation getting quite dull (as it inevitably happens on the stage) and, therefore, wrote them the shortest.

Some of the situations, particularly the scene of dream-vision and the dream-talk appear to detract from the bounds of realism. But this is only an apparent impression which is removed after deeper analysis. One has always to remember that literary situations are the creations of the artists' mind, and they are not to be judged by an individual's sense of reality but by the operation of the Law of Probability.

What is really striking is that once a situation is put on Bhāsa generally handles it naturally and skilfully and carries conviction to a degree. The meeting in Pramadavana and the unveiling of Vāsavadattā are instances in point. The latter is managed with such a sustained skill as to keep up the suspense till the end. And, for ought we know, Kālidāsa might have been influenced by it when he constructed the seventh Act of *Śākuntala,* with perhaps greater skill.

But it appears that sometimes in employing a device or motif in the creation of a situation, Bhāsa either omits (as he does about the stage-directions) or forgets to give a full explanation. For example, about the headache of Padmāvatī and the loss of the lute. I have tried to offer an explanation of the vagueness that has inevitably crept in here. But so far as the motif for lifting up Vāsavadattā's veil is concerned, the prevalent confusion appears to be inescapable. One has to admit either a positive blunder here or a defect in the text and reconstruct the dialogue by omitting Udayana's absurd sentence as I have shown on a previous page. Ideally speaking, these are defective links in the dramatic construction.

However, Bhāsa definitely possesses a power for creating and maintaining dramatic suspense. It appears that in this play he is greatly helped by the intrinsic potentialities of the plot for dramatic irony. Vāsavadattā parades throughout in a disguise which she must keep up in face of temptations and dangers for disclosure. The stay of Vāsavadattā, Padmāvatī and Udayana together in the same palace gives a sharper edge to this temptation and danger, and inevitably brings dramatic irony and suspense. But what is more remarkable is the art and great success of Bhāsa in conceiving these potentialities, in boldly putting them on the stage (which a mediocre writer

might evade) and in confidently facing the superb task of skilfully handling them. For, while in the inherent design dramatic interest was definitely assured, the dangers of making a mess of the whole thing were also very obvious. Bhāsa has courageously run into these dangers, has brushed with them, and, though in one or two places his fingers are scratched, he has emerged out of them pretty safely and deftly.

Bhāsa may be less successful as a mere literary artist But drama is 'visual poetry' and its one test is the success of stage-representation, then it will be difficult to find easy parallels to the successful construction of *Svapnavāsavadatta* as a stage-play. Bhāsa surely shows a greater stage-craft than most of the other Sanskrit dramatists.

References

1. Sv., Intr., p. 63.
2. Sarup, Sv., Intr., p. 63.
3. 'पद्मावती नरपतेर्महिषी भवित्री । दृष्टा विपत्तिरथ यैः प्रथमं प्रदिष्टा' ॥ Act I. II ab.
4. cf. 'पूर्वं त्वयाप्यभिमतं गतमेवमासीच्छ्लाघ्यं गमिष्यसि पुनर्विजयेन भर्तुः ।' Act I. 4 ab., where Yaug. holds out the prospect of victory to cheer Vā. up.
5. cf. यौगन्धरायणः- (आत्मगतम्) हन्त भोः अर्धमवसितं भारस्य । यथा मन्त्रिभिः सह समर्थितं तथा परिणमति । ततः प्रतिष्ठिते स्वामिनि तत्रभवतीमुपनयतो मे इहात्रभवती मगधराजपुत्री विश्वासस्थानं भविष्यति । Act I.

   cf. also, राजा—वयस्य यौगन्धरायण, देव्यपनयने का कृता ते बुद्धिः ।

   यौगन्ध०—कौशाम्बीमात्रं परिपालयामीति ।

   राजा—अथ पद्मावत्या हस्ते किं न्यासकारणम् ।

   यौगन्ध०—पुष्पकभद्रादिभिरादेशिकैरादिष्टा स्वामिनो देवी भविष्यतीति । Act VI.
6. See Act V, vv. 12, 13.
7. Read: 'अर्धमवसितं भारस्य । यथा मन्त्रिभिः सह समर्थितं तथा परिणमति ।' Act I.
8. cf. Vā's anxiety in the dream scene, Act V, महान् खलु आर्ययौगन्धरायणस्य प्रतिज्ञाभारो मम दर्शनेन निष्फलः संवृत्तः ।

9. Vide foot-note 8.

10. Sv., Intr. p. 68.

11. When Yaug. decides to deposit Vā. with Pad., she says: 'इह मां निक्षेप्तुकाम इव आर्ययौगन्धरायण: भवतु, अविचार्य क्रमं न करिष्यति ।' Act I.

12. cf. Vid.'s speech after VI. I, where he is anxiously searching for Padmāvatī.

13. cf. 'नैवेदानीं तादृशाश्चक्रवाका
    नैवाप्यन्ये स्त्रीविशेषैर्वियुक्ता: ।
    धन्या सा स्त्री यां तथा वेत्ति भर्ता
    भर्तृस्नेहात् सा हि दग्धाप्यदग्धा ॥' Act I. v. 13.

14. This is evidently a question of temperament. Compare in this connection the speech of Jaques on the 'hunted deer' in Shakespeare's "As You Like It."

15. Read: ब्रह्मचारी... (प्रविश्य) अये, आश्रमविरुद्ध: खल्वेष जन: । (अन्यतो विलोक्य) अथवा तपस्विजनोऽप्यत्र । निर्दोषमुपर्पसणम् । अये, स्त्रीजन: । काञ्चुकीय–स्वैरं प्रविशतु भवान् । सर्वजनसाधारणमाश्रमपदं नाम । Act I.

16. She says: 'हला शकुन्तले, अनभ्यन्तरे खल्वावां मदनगतस्य वृत्तान्तस्य । किंतु यादृशीतिहासनिबन्धेषु कामयमानानामवस्था श्रूयते तादृशीं तव पश्यामि । *Śāk.* Act III.

17. cf. पद्मावती—हम् आर्यपुत्र: । आर्ये, तव कारणादार्यपुत्रदर्शनं परिहरामि। तदिमं तावन्माधवीलतामण्डपं प्रविशाम: । Act IV.

18. राजा—अस्मिन्नेवासीनौ शिलातले पद्मावतीं प्रतीक्षिष्यावहे ।
    विदूषक:—भोस्तथा । (उपविश्योत्थाय) ही ही शरत्कालतीक्ष्णो दु:सह आतप: । तदिमं तावन्माधवीमण्डपं प्रविशाव: । *ibid.*

19. Read : 'राजा—मधुकरसंत्रास: परिहार्य: । पश्य
    मधुमदकला मधुकरा मदनार्ताभि: प्रियाभिरुपगूढा: ।
    पादन्यासविषण्णा वयमिव कान्तावियुक्ता: स्यु: ॥ *ibid.* V. 3.

20. A suggestion personally made to me by Professor H.D. Velankar who interprets the 'किल' in 'समुद्रगृहके किल शय्यास्तीर्णा' to mean 'hearsay report'.

21. To Madhukarikā who does not immediately get the point in conveying the news to Āvantikā, Padminikā, the maid, replies : 'सा खलु इदानीं मधुराभिः कथाभिर्भर्तृदारिकायाः शीर्षवेदनां विनोदयति ।' Act V.
22. Read : पद्मावती—आर्ये कथं त्वं जानासि ।
वासवदत्ता—(आत्मगतम्) आर्यपुत्रपक्षपातेनातिक्रान्तः समुदाचारः । किमिदानीं करिष्यामि। भवतु, दृष्टम् । (प्रकाशम्) हला, एवमुज्जयिनीयो जनो मन्त्रयते ।
पद्मावती—युज्यते । न खल्वेष उज्जयिनीदुर्लभः । Act II.
23. Sv., notes, pp. 194-195.
24. See Gaj. Sv., notes, p. 195. The arguments in defense of Bhāsa are originally developed by Prof. Gajendragadkar except for the argument No. (*v*) which is mine.
25. Prof. Gajendragadkar has dealt with this question also. See his Sv., notes, p. 199. I have perhaps gone into more elaborate and thorough details.
26. See Gaj. Sv., notes, p. 210.
27. I think Kālidasā must have taken this cue from Bhāsa in employing such a device for achieving a decisive turning point in the story. But he seems to manage it with perfect skill. For, the loss and the recovery of the ring in *Śākuntala* are circumstances that are completely cogent and convincing.
28. Udayana says in reply to Padmāvatī's doubt, 'कलत्रदर्शनार्हं जनं कलत्रदर्शनात् परिहरति इति बहुदोषमुत्पादयति । तस्मादास्यताम् ।' Act VI.
29. 'आर्यपुत्र, अस्या प्रतिकृत्याः सदृशीहैव प्रतिवसति ।' *ibid.*
30. cf. राजा—यदि विप्रस्य भगिनी व्यक्तमन्या भविष्यति ।
परस्परगता लोके दृश्यते तुल्यरूपता ।।' *ibid.* V. 14.
31. cf. Kaṇvaś sentiment : 'जातो ममायं विशदः प्रकामं प्रत्यर्पितन्यास इवान्तरात्मा' *Śākuntala*, Act IV. 21.
32. cf. आर्य, प्रथममुद्घोष्य कः किमच्छतीत्ययुक्तमिदानीं विचारयितुम । यदेष भणति तदनुतिष्ठत्वार्यः ।' Act I.
33. Udayana had only heaved a sigh in reply to her question about music lessons. Padmāvatī further remarks, 'तर्कयामि, आर्यया वासवदत्ताया गुणान् स्मृत्वा ममाग्रतो न रोदितीति ।' Act IV.

34. Read : वासवदत्ता—हला प्रियस्ते भर्ता ।
पद्मावती—आर्ये, न जानामि । आर्यपुत्रेण विरहितोत्कण्ठिता भवामि । on which the चेटी remarks, 'अभिजातं खलु भर्तृदारिकया मन्त्रितं प्रियो मे भर्तेति ।' *ibid.*

35. cf. *Śākuntala*, Act V, where, on finding that Duṣyanta does not recognise Śākuntala, गौतमी says, 'अपनेष्यामि ते अवगुण्ठनं ...' etc.

36. cf. Duṣyanta's sentiment : 'भवतु, अनिर्वर्णनीयं परकलत्रम्' *Śāk.*, V.

37. Read : पद्मावती—(उपसृत्य) जयत्वार्यपुत्रः । एष न्यासः । . . . . आर्य, नीयतामिदानीमार्या ।
धात्री—(आवन्तिकां निर्वर्ण्य) अम्मो, भर्तृदारिका वासवदत्ता ।
राजा—कथं महासेनपुत्री । देवि, प्रविश त्वमभ्यन्तरं पद्मावत्या सह ।
यौगन्धरायणः—न खलु न खलु प्रवेष्टव्यम् । मम भगिनी खल्वेषा ।
राजा—किं भवानाह । महासेनपुत्री खल्वेषा ।
यौगन्धरायणः—भो राजन्
भारतानां कुले जातो विनीतो ज्ञानवाञ्छुचिः ।
तन्नार्हसि बलाद्धर्तुं राजधर्मस्य देशिकः ॥
राजा—भवतु, पश्यामस्तावद् रूपसादृश्यम् । संक्षिप्यतां यवनिका ।
Act VI

2

BHĀSA'S TREATMENT OF THE KṚṢṆA LEGEND

Among the 'cycle of Bhāsa plays,' we have the *Bālacarita* which dramatizes the childhood-life of Kṛṣṇa, beginning with the divine birth and closing with the killing of Kaṁsa. The dramatic form necessarily imposes selection and presentation of chosen material; so that certain incidents may be omitted or merely narrated, certain details may be modified or changed, and characters or incidents may be newly added. All this is natural in a literary endeavour and is nearly always justifiable by dramatic necessity and purpose. But Bhāsa's treatment of the Kṛṣṇa legend shows some significant deviations. They need to be investigated. I will assume that the plot of the *Bālacarita* is known to Sanskrit readers and draw attention only to some significant deviations in the story.

(i) One such deviation is about Viṣṇu-Kṛṣṇa being the seventh or the eighth child of Devakī. Bhāsa clearly regards this child as the seventh[1]. The evidence, on the contrary, from the *Harivaṁśa* and the *Bhāgavata* points out that this was the eighth child. In the *Harivaṁśa* narrative, Nārada informs Kaṁsa that Devakī's eighth child shall be his death[2]. It is also stated through the speech of Viṣṇu to Nidrā that the seventh foetus of Devakī shall be transferred to her co-wife, Kaṁsa will think that Devakī had a miscarriage due to fear, and then Viṣṇu will enter her womb as the eighth child, which Kaṁsa will try to kill[3]. The *Bhāgavata* states that Kaṁsa killed six children of Devakī, the seventh foetus was the divine Ananta, a portion of Viṣṇu Himself; Viṣṇu instructed Yogamāyā to transfer it to Rohiṇī who lived in

Nanda-gokula along with other women out of fear of Kaṁsa; with the other divine portion Viṣṇu will permit Himself to be born as Devakī's son and Yogamāyā will be born as the child of Nanda's wife[4]. People were expected to take the seventh child as a miscarriage[5]. Apparently therefore Viṣṇu becomes the eighth child.

In the dramatic presentation of Kṛṣṇa's childhood-life, the point whether he was the seventh or the eighth issue of Devakī is indeed a minor one. Yet this deviation from the purāṇic version exists in the dramatic version. Had Bhāsa used it as a significant motive of introducing an already accepted incident in a new dramatic context or for some purpose of plot-construction, it would have been easy to explain it as such. In that case it would have been a deliberate departure from the source made for a dramatic purpose. But it is not so. In Bhāsa's play it serves no purpose whatsoever. He could easily have allowed Kṛṣṇa to be the eighth child. The deviation therefore points, in my opinion, either to a different source than the two *purāṇas*, or rather to an early phase of the Kṛṣṇa legend.

I am inclined to think that the early phase looked upon Kṛṣṇa as the seventh child and some traces of it can be discovered in the existing *purāṇa* version.

The *purāṇa* story clearly states that Kaṁsa killed six issues of Devakī before the turn came for Kṛṣṇa[6]. The statements in the Bhāsa play are similar[7]. But the legend now takes a turn. The seventh foetus is no doubt divine; but it is treated as a part of Viṣṇu called *agraja* or the elder brother of Kṛṣṇa by name Śaṅkarṣaṇa in the *Harivaṁśa* and Ananta or Śeṣa in the *Bhāgavata*[8]. This foetus is transferred to Rohiṇī and at the same time Viṣṇu enters the womb of Devakī[9]. As a matter of fact, this could well be treated as the seventh conception, since it is a case of transference and substitution. It seems, therefore, the *purāṇa* legend treats Kṛṣṇa as the eighth child, (although it is the seventh conception) in order to accommodate the new idea that Rāma or Balarāma is also Devakī's child though born of Rohiṇī and that he too is a divine incarnation. The punning on the name Sankarṣaṇā

appears to be a poetic ingenuity to fit the myth of transference of foetus[10].

The Kṛṣṇa could have been the seventh child but was treated as the eighth in order to accommodate Sankarṣaṇa or Balarāma as the seventh is indirectly supported by another legend which the *Harivaṁśa* narrates and mixes up with the birth of Kṛṣṇa : This legend is of demons, dwelling in the nether world, who were the sons of Kālanemi and known by the name Ṣaḍ-garbha (lit. six foetuses). They worshipped Brahmā with severe austerities and begged from Him a boon that they would not be killed by gods, semi-divine beings or men, or by the curse of sages or by weapons. This boon was granted. It enraged Hiraṇyakaśipu as he was bypassed. He cursed these demons that they will be true to their names : They will remain merely as foetuses and will be killed in the womb by their father : the demons are six; Devakī will have six foetuses; and Kaṁsa will kill them as they lay in the womb. Viṣṇu on his visit to Pātāla saw the great demons, Ṣaḍgarbhas, being asleep in water in the womb, under the spell of death-sleep. He entered their bodies, revived them, and asked Nidrā to arrange that the Ṣaḍgarbha demons will be put in Devakī's womb in due order. It is further said that Nidrā will receive Viṣṇu's favour for this work and she will be regarded as the goddess of the world[11]. This legend enables the linking of the issues of Devakī and Yaśodā, because Nidrā or Yogamāyā will be born as Yaśodā's child and the exchange easily facilitated. And it also underlines the original detail of only six issues. The supposition therefore, that in the earlier phase Kṛṣṇa was looked upon as the seventh child of Devakī and the later attempt to bestow divinity on Balarāma-Saṅkarṣaṇa necessitated the change in the number of order appears to be plausible. It then follows that Bhāsa was drawing his material from the early phase of the Kṛṣṇa legend, in which neither Saṅkarṣaṇa nor Yogamāyā figured.

(ii) In the dramatic story the exchange of children is neither preplanned nor mooted. Vasudeva's idea in the *Bālacarita* is only to take the child to a place of safety, away from the clutches of Kaṁsa. He crosses Yamunā, comes to

the cowherd village and meets Nandagopa by coincidence. His request to Nandagopa is only to accept the child in his safe-keeping and act as its custodian and guardian[12]. The girl that was born to Nanda's wife Yaśodā was still-born. The babe would have been ordinarily buried. It was only because the babe suddenly came to life that Vasudeva decided to take her away and use her as a substitute.

It is not possible to say whether this is a deviation from the original legend or a calculated change effected for dramatic purposes. If the simultaneous births of Kṛṣṇa as Devakī's child and of Yogamāyā or Nidrā as Yaśoda's[13], and the substitution, were a later development of the legend, Bhāsa's treatment would not appear to be quite a deviation. It will be utilization of the known legend. At the same time it must be remembered that Bhāsa's presentation is full of dramatic interest. It creates an atmosphere of anxiety and suspense so far as Vasudeva's effort is concerned. His meeting with Nanda is a coincidenee in the drama, but a coincidence justified by dramatic necessity. The meeting creates further a tension of human emotions and Nanda's acceptance of Vasudeva's child elevates his character to the level of nobility. It is true that Bhāsa retains in the story a number of supernatural factors which attend this incident. Yet the tense drama of conflicting human emotions is the dramatist's creation and that would never have been possible with the present legend of pre-planned exchange and mutual substitution of the two babes. It is therefore possible that Bhāsa may have changed the details of this incident to achieve his dramatic purpose. The simultaneous birth and exchange of the two children is a factor which is really unconnected with the one whether the children were the seventh or the eighth issue. And so, it may have been a part of the legend, considering also the fact that the smashed girl is transformed into a divinity and Bhāsa presents this miracle in the play. In that case, the only significant departure that Bhāsa made would be to show that Yaśodā's child was still-born and that the exchange of babies took place not secretly as in the present legend but in the meeting between Vasudeva and Nandagopa. The dead child would provide the necessary ground for

bringing Nandagopa out to the outskirts of the village and arrange the dramatic meeting between him and Vasudeva. However I have a suspicion that the details that the dramatist has presented, namely, Vasudeva's simple attempt to carry away the child to a safe place, leaving it in the custody of Nandagopa and then carrying away the girl, available by a lucky coincidence, to use as a substitute, may have been the features of the early legend before it was wrapped with mystery and miracle.

(iii) In the present legend the relations between Vasudeva aud Nandagopa are not precisely defined. The *Harivaṁśa* describes Kaṁsa as the lord of the cows and Nandagopa as a cowherd under his sway[14] Nanda's wife Yaśodā was apparently liked by Kaṁsa[15]. The *Bhāgavata* tells us that Vasudeva's wives including Rohiṇi were secretly living in Nanda's village out of fear of Kaṁsa[16]. Later, when Nanda had come to Kaṁsa to pay his annual taxes Vasudeva went out to meet him. Nanda embraced him as a brother and was sorry to find that loving friends could not stay together[17]. The *Bhāgavata* thus assures of a close, affectionate and friendly tie between the two.

Bhāsa on other hand, shows Nandagopa to be a serf of Vasudeva. Kaṁsa, as the king, is the supreme lord over the entire land of his kingdom. But Vasudeva is Nandagopa's 'master' and the latter calls him as such. We also learn that Vasudeva, at the order of Kaṁsa, had to inflict punishment on Nandagopa for some offence that he had committed. Nandagopa was whipped with lashes and fettered. Nanda enters the stage dragging his fettered foot[18]. This picture of relations between the two enables Bhāsa to make the impending meeting full of dramatic tension and also to create a fine human personality out of Nandagopa.

Is this a departure from the legend in order to introduce a touching dramatic motive or does it reflect an earlier phase of a simple legend ? The point is of course difficult to be decided. But it is interesting to see that the *Ghata Jātaka* which recounts the story of Kaṁsa and his sister Devagabbhā refers to Nandagopa as the serving woman or maid of Devagabbhā[19], with whom the latter exchanged her ten sons for her

ten daughters in order to escape their slaughter at the hand of Kaṁsa. The *Jātaka* version is quite likely to be a later one. It indicates only a possibility that a certain tradition may have looked upon Nandagopa and his wife as Vasudeva's servants.

(iv) Towards the close of the first act, when Nandagopa accepts the responsibility of looking after the child Kṛṣṇa, the dramatist presents an actual vision of Viṣṇu's vehicle and his weapons. These are presented in human form on the stage and verse and prose speeches are assigned to them. Viṣṇu's weapons and his vehicle, the Eagle, are quite well-known. Their presentation on the stage, although it deviates from the *purāṇa* story, may have been added for a definite dramatic effect. It reveals and emphasises the divine descent of Viṣṇu in human form ; it also presents a spectacular episode which will have a thrilling impact, at least on a section of the audience. The personification of the divine eagle and the weapons serves, therefore, a dramatic purpose and this is its only justification.

The only point worth considering is that here, as also in the *Dūtavākya*, Bhāsa introduces five weapons : the discus Sudarśana, the bow Śārṅga, the mace Kaumodakī, the sword Nandaka and the conch Pāñcajanya. The usually known accompaniments are Śaṅkha, Cakra, Gadā and Padma (conch, discus, mace, lotus). Is the difference, again, a matter of chronological modification and evolution ?

(v) The miracle at the smashing of the girl by Kaṁsa occurs in the dramatic story. But the details vary from the *purāṇic* account. Kaṁsa, in the *Bālacarita*, notices that a part of the smashed girl falls to the ground, but another part rises up in the sky. It reveals multiple arms all blazing with weapons and seems to have manifested itself to strike Kaṁsa down. Kaṁsa feels that the time of his death has come ; the apparition looks like the Night of Death (Kālarātrī) weilding a spike of sharp edge and grows in size in terrifying robes[10]. The vision is called Kārtyāyanī. She is accompanied by Kuṇḍodara, Śaṅkukarṇa, Mahānīla and Manojava who form her retinue. She describes herself as having killed Sumbha, Nisuṁbha, Mahiṣa and other enemies of gods and as now

taking birth in the family of Vasudeva for the purpose of destroying the Kaṁsa family[21].

In the *Harivaṁśa* account she is Nidrā who is called upon for assistance by Viṣṇu. She is to transfer the Ṣaḍgarbha demons to the womb of Devakī so that they will be born as Devakī's children. She is also to transfer the seventh foetus to Rohiṇī and permit herself to be born as Yaśodā's child and thereby she will be the ninth incarnated issue in the Viṣṇu family[22], Kṛṣṇa being the eighth. Viṣṇu promises her personal favour for this service. When Kaṁsa would hold her by one leg and smash her on the stone she would rise up in the sky : She will have the same dark complexion as that of Viṣṇu, but the facial features of Saṅkarṣaṇa : massive arms holding three-pronged spike, a sword with gold handle, a pot of sweet wine and a lotus. She will wear a blue garment and a yellow covering garment, a necklace shining like moonrays, heavenly ear-rings. She will wear her hair in three circular piles with a crown. Her long arms will be as smooth as serpant-slough and she will have a natural shoulder-ornament and also a raised banner of peacock feathers. She will be surrounded by the host of goblins. Indra will coronate her as a goddess and she will be installed on the Vindhya mountain as Kauśikī. She will kill Suṁbha, Nisuṁbha and other hill-dwelling demons. On the nineth day she will be offered worship and food of meat and will fulfil the desires of her devotees. She is given various names, among which Kālarātrī also occurs[23].

This description is presented as Viṣṇu's prediction of the coming event. Later, when Kaṁsa actually smashes the babe, she rises up as a very beautiful divine girl, laughing and dancing in sky and promising that she will tear Kaṁsa's body and drink his hot blood[24].

The *Bhāgavata* account is much similar. Here she is Yogamāyā whom the Divine Lord orders for assistance. She is promised worship and offerings from men. She will be known in many places and by many names like Durgā, Bhadrakālī, Vijayā, Vaiṣṇavī, Kumudā, Caṇḍikā Kṛṣṇā, Mādhavī, Kanyakā, Māyā, Nārāyaṇī, Īśānī, Śārdā, Ambikā.[25] In the actual miracle she is described as the younger sister of Viṣṇu, eight-armed, weilding eight weapons (bow, spike,

arrow, skin or armour, sword, conch, discus, mace) and heavenly garments, garlands, unguents, jewels and ornaments[26].

The significant variations present in the dramatic story will now be apparent : (i) The dramatic detail that on smashing a portion of the babe's body falls to the ground and another portion rises up in sky is *not* present in the *purāṇa* versions. (ii) The dramatist calls this Vision by the name Kārtyāyanī. This name does not occur in the *purāṇa* list. One of the names, Kālarātrī, is found in the drama. But it is significant to remember that it occurs not as a name but in an imagery which Kaṁsa uses before the Vision rises up. (iii) The *purāṇa* accounts refer to the accompanying host with a vague term 'Bhūtagaṇa'. The drama gives four specific names which are not found elsewhere. (iv) The personal appearance, number of arms, weapons etc. connected with the Vision are again different in the dramatic and *purāṇic* accounts. (v) The connection of this Vision with Viṣṇu's pre-planned arrangement is naturally absent in the dramatic story.

I am not attempting here a study of the Kṛṣṇa legend in its gradual phases of growth and evolution. It is a subject that must take a separate treatment. I am concerned for the moment with Bhāsa's treatment of the legend. And the comparative study so far indicates the following conclusions :

(1) Some details in the dramatic version, like the relation between Vasudeva and Nandagopa, the visions of Viṣṇu's weapons and of Kārtyāyanī, may have been introduced for a dramatic purpose and for a spectacular stage effect.

(2) Some variations, however, like Kṛṣṇa being the seventh child of Devakī, absence of the mention of Saṅkarṣaṇa as well as of the pre-arranged plan of the exchange of babes, and in that case Nandagopa being shown as the serf of Vasudeva, cannot be completely justified by dramatic necessity. There is a possibility that some such details may refer to an early phase of Kṛṣṇa legend which was known to the dramatist.

(3) The dramatist does not minimize the miraculous and

supernatural elements in the story. He even uses some of them for a dramatic and spectacular effect. Yet the vision of Kārtyāyanī contains a little puzzle. Some details in it, like the associates of the goddess, may possibly go back to a period anterior to that of the *purāṇic* account. The mention of Suṁbha and Niśuṁbha, however, seems to be definitely associated with Kālī or Durgā with whom the Vision is identified in the *purāṇa* story. This according to many critics is a later development. If so, we must suspect an interpolation in the dramatic story, not in the entire episode but only in the verse put in the mouth of Kārtyāyanī[27].

The point, of course, is difficult to be decided, the state of accuracy of relative chronology in Ancient Indian History being what it is. But we may admit the possibility that some passages, especially verses may have been later introduced in the play to make it up-to-date, though such insertion was an anachronism. It is not necessary to assume that the entire play is spurious; it cannot become one because a few passages are of doubtful chronology. Besides, we know that Kṛṣṇa worship, which is connected with the Bhāgavata religion is quite old. Megasthenes (300 B. C.) knew Mathurā as the centre of Kṛṣṇa worship[28] Dr. Bhandarkar points out that Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa is an old personality and his identification with the cowherd Kṛṣṇa (which latter is the subject of the drama) may be dated from about the beginning of the Christian era[29]. The present *Harivaṁśa* is supposed to be composed at about 400 A.D. Dr. P.L. Vaidya believes that it contains 'the oldest phase of the Kṛṣṇa myth'[30]. The oral tradition must naturally go back quite a few centuries. Some of the divergences found in the dramatic story may be due to the fact that it drew material from beliefs which belong to a floating period between the old oral tradition and the new *purāṇa* phase of the legend based on bardic variations.

References

1. Cf. *Bālacarita* I.10 अगणितपरिखेदा याति षण्णां सुतानामपचयगनार्थं सप्तमं रक्षमाणा । I.19. 11. 71-72. वसुदेव speaking to Nandagopa, वयस्य ननु त्वमपि जानासि दुरात्मना कंसेन मम षड्पुत्रा

निधनमुपानीता इति । . . . तत् सप्तमोऽयं दीर्घायुः ।

II.12 (वसुदेवः) षण्णां सुतानां समुपेत्य नाशम् ... ।

II.17 (कंसः) अयं हि सप्तमो गर्भ ऋषिशापबलोत्थितः ।

2. *Harivaṁśa* (HV) (Cr. Ed. BORI) 46.15 :

तत्रैषा देवकी या ते मथुरायां पितृष्वसा ।
अस्या गर्भोऽष्टमः कंस स ते मृत्युर्भविष्यति ॥

also HV. 47.10 : सप्तेमान् देवकीगर्भान् भोजपुत्रो वधिष्यति ।
अष्टमे च मया गर्भे कार्यमाधानमात्मनः ॥

3. *Harivaṁśa*, 47.32 :

पतितो देवकीगर्भः सप्तमोऽयं भयादिति ।
अष्टमे मयि गर्भस्थे कंसो यत्नं करिष्यति ॥

4. *Bhāgavata* (Bh.) X : 34 : An aerial voice announces to Kaṁsa, as he is driving the newly wed Devakī to her home, that her 8th son will kill him :

पथि प्रग्रहिणं कंसमाभाष्याहाशरीरवाक् ।
अस्यास्त्वाष्टमो गर्भो हन्ता यां वहसेऽबुध ॥

And Bh. X.ii :

हतेषु षट्सु बालेषु देवक्या औग्रसेनिना ॥४॥
सप्तमो वैष्णवं धाम यमनन्तं प्रचक्षते ॥
गर्भो बभूव देवक्या हर्षशोकविवर्धनः ॥५॥
... भगवानपि ... योगमायां समादिशत् ॥६॥
देवक्या जठरे गर्भं शेषाख्यं धाम मामकम् ।
तत् संनिकृष्य रोहिण्या उदरे संनिवेशय ॥८॥
अथाहमंशभागेन देवक्याः पुत्रतां शुभे ।
प्राप्स्यामि त्वं यशोदायां नन्दपत्न्यां भविष्यसि ॥९॥

5. *Bhāgavata* X.ii :

गर्भे प्रणीते देवक्या रोहिणीं योगनिद्रया ।
अहो विस्रंसितो गर्भ इति पौरा विचुक्रुशुः ॥१५॥

6. *Harivaṁśa*, 48.2 :

षड् गर्भान् निःसृतान् कंसस्तान् जघान शिलातले ।

Bhāgavata X.ii. 4 :

हतेषु षट्सु बालेषु देवक्या औग्रसेनिना ।

7. See footnote (1) above.
8. H.V. 47.31; Bh. X.ii.5:8.
9. Cf. H.V. 48:8 : तस्य गर्भस्य मार्गेण गर्भमादत्त देवकी ।

10. See H.V. 47 :

सप्तमो देवकीगर्भो योंऽशः सौम्यो ममाग्रजः ।
स संक्रामयितव्यस्ते सप्तमे मासि रोहिणीम् ॥३०॥
संकर्षणात्तु गर्भस्य स तु संकर्षणो युवा ।
भविष्यत्यग्रजो भ्राता मम शीतांशुदर्शनः ॥३१॥

Also 48.6 :

कर्षणेनास्य गर्भस्य स्वगर्भे चाहितस्य वै ।
संकर्षणो नाम शुभे तव पुत्रो भविष्यति ॥

The Bh. has the same explanation: it also explains the name Rāma and Bala. See X ii.13 :

गर्भसंकर्षणात्तं वै प्राहुः संकर्षणं भुवि ।
रामेति लोकरमणाद् बलं बलवदुच्छ्रयात् ॥

11. H.V. 47.11 to 29.
12. Cf. *Bālacarita*, I.10. ff.

देवकी—कहिं अय्यउत्तो इमं णइस्सदि ।
वसुदेवः—देवकि सत्यं ब्रवीषि । अहमपि न जाने । किन्तु एकच्छत्रछायां पृथिवीं समाज्ञापयति दुरात्मा कंसः । तत् क्व न खलु आयुष्मान् नेतव्यो भविष्यति । अथवा यत्र दैवं विधास्यति तत्र बालं गृहीत्वापक्रामामि ।

Later he says to Nandagopa (I.19. 74-75) :

नास्ति मम पुत्रेषु भाग्यम् । तव भाग्याज्जीवितुं गृह्यताम ।

Nanda also says in fear (I.19. 76-78) :

जदि कंषो ळाओ षुणादि-वषुदेवष्ष दाळओ णन्दगोवष्ष हत्थे णाषो णिक्खित्तो त्ति ... किं बहुणा गदं एव्व मे षीषं ।

13. Cf. HV. 47. : Viṣṇu directs Nidrā as follows :

या तु सा नन्दगोपस्य दयिता कंसगोपतेः ।
यशोदा नाम भद्रं ते भार्या गोपकुलोद्वहा ॥ ३३ ॥
तस्यास्त्वं नवमोऽस्माकं कुले गर्भो भविष्यसि ।
नवम्यामेव संजाता कृष्णपक्षस्य वै तिथौ ॥ ३४ ॥
अहं त्वभिजितो योगे निशाया यौवने गते ।
अर्धरात्रे करिष्यामि गर्भमोक्षं यथासुखम् ॥ ३५ ॥
अष्टमस्य तु मासस्य जातावावां ततः समम् ।
प्राप्स्यावो गर्भव्यत्यासं प्राप्ते कंसस्य शासने ॥३६॥

Also 48.11 :

गर्भकाले त्वसंपूर्णे अष्टमे मासि ते स्त्रियौ ।
देवकी च यशोदा च सुषुवाते समं तदा ॥

14. Cf. HV. 47:33 : quoted above.
15. Cf. HV. 48.12 b :
    नन्दगोपस्य भार्यां वै कंसगोपस्य संमता ॥
16. *Bhāgavata* X.ii. 7
    रोहिणी वसुदेवस्य भार्याऽऽस्ते नन्दगोकुले ।
    अन्याश्च कंससंविग्ना विवरेषु वसन्ति हि ॥
17. Bh. X.v. 19 ff,
18. Read, *Bālacarita* I.19. 22-25. :
    षळयोगेण भट्टा वषुदेव त्ति जाणामि । ज्ञाव उवषप्पिष्षं । अहव तहि मम कि कय्यं । एदिणा कंषष्ष ळञ्ञो वअणं षुणिअ अवळद्धो कषाहि ताळिअ णिअळेहि बद्धो म्हि ।
19. Reference quoted in *Tribes in Ancient India* by B.C. Law Bhandarkara Oriental Series No. 4, 2nd ed. Poona, 1973; p.43. See the Jataka ed. by V. Fausboll. Vol. IV, London. Trubner & Co., 1887; pp. 79 ff. for *Ghatajātaka*. The original wording is
    नन्दगोपा नाम अस्सा परिचारिका अहोसि ... ।
20. *Bālacarita,* II,18.19.
21. *Ibid.*, II. verses 20 to 24.
22. *Harivaṁśa,* 47. 26—34. 'Nineth' in the general order of issues; but she will be born simultaneously with Kṛṣṇa.
23. *Ibid.*, 47. 38-55.
24. *Ibid.*, 48. 28-35.
25. *Bhāgavata,* X. ii. 6-12.
26. *Ibid.*, X. iv. 9-11.
27. *Bālacarita,* II. 20.
28. See Rapson,*Cambridge History of India,* Vol. I, p. 167.
29. *Vaiṣṇavism, Śaivism and Minor Religious Systems,* Bhandarkar O.R. Institute, Poona, 1928; pp. 49-54.
30. *Harivaṁśa,* Critical edition. Bhandarker O.R. Institute, Poona, 1969. Introduction pp. XV AND L.

3

BHĀSA
AND THE PROBLEM OF TRAGEDY

[1]

Ūrubhaṅga and *Karṇabhāra*, the two one-act plays of Bhāsa, raise certain literary problems which are as interesting as they are worth investigating.

There are some similarities in these two plays. For instance, both are based on episodes and events drawn from the *Mahābhārata*. Both are one-act constructions. The contrary or halting opinion that they may be detached acts from a long Mahābhārata saga may be ignored. The antecedent context of the epic story is taken for granted. The dramatist also prefixes an interlude (*Viṣkambhaka*) to the *Urubhaṅga* to provide an immediate context to the main picture with which the play is concerned. There is no feeling of an abrupt end and an expectation of a further story development. Further, there is a prevailing atmosphere of pathos, nay tragic sorrow, in these plays. Both depict the last moments of the life of two war-heroes from the Kaurava side. In the case of one, Duryodhana, the play ends with his death, shown on the stage; the other hero, Karṇa, does not die on the stage; but there is very little doubt that he is marching towards the last battle of his life.

Similarities apart, the stage scene of the death of a central dramatic character is an unusual occurrence in Sanskrit drama, an occurrence that is to be met with only in the Bhāsa plays. The first problem, therefore, is: what is the expected *emotional response* of a reader/spectator to these dramatic pieces?

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The theory and established tradition would want us to look upon the deaths of Duryodhana and Karṇa as an exemplification of just punishment meted out to them by Divinity or Destiny for their unrighteous and wicked conduct of life. The epic background compels this attitude. The general tenor of the Mahābhārata is that the right was on the Pāṇḍava side. The Kauravas are villains, the wicked party, that maligned truth and justice. Duryodhana as the chief of the Kauravas and Karṇa as his staunch supporter and his General in the fratricidal war have both to wear this label of villainy. With this attitude, the sorrow and death of Duryodhana and Karṇa are not expected to evoke any sympathetic response from us. It is an occasion not for sorrow and sympathy but for relief and joy. Such a reaction is quite possible to the death of Kaṁsa in Bhāsa's *Bālacarita*. In this play, Kṛṣṇa is the central figure of a hero and Kaṁsa is the villain, although the dramatist shows that Kaṁsa is conscious of his own guilt and wickedness. In a similar way, Duryodhana in the second act of the *Veṇīsaṁhāra* does evoke neither our admiration nor our sympathy.

Our response then will have to be organised differently. The dramatic theory of *rasa* and emotional response would lead us to look upon these two plays as exemplifying *vīra* or *raudra rasa*. Bhīma and Arjuna would be the heroes of *Ūrubhaṅga* and *Karṇabhāra* respectively, although they do not appear on the scene and operate from behind the curtain. The pathos in the lives of Duryodhana and Karṇa and their deaths would be the natural results of the actions of the heroes. In other words, the *karuṇa* that we experience in these plays would be incidental and subordinate to the heroic or the furious sentiment. Any notion of tragic sorrow or sympathetic response is thus ruled out by the theory and by the traditional approach to the understanding of these plays.

However, our emotional reaction to these plays is, in fact, different from what the theory would indicate and the traditional approach would expect. We do feel genuine sympathy

for Duryodhana and Karṇa. And since this is our own real experience, there is no point in denying it. What is necessary, therefore, is not to quarrel with the dramatic theory but to understand such an emotional response and try to explain it. The theory or the traditional approach may both be right for an ancient audience of the Sanskrit drama, and even for a spectator of today whose emotional responses are fostered by traditional approaches and attitudes. The truth only is that many of us in the present times have different attitude and response to dramatic presentation. Brought up in a new set of literary and cultural values, we are not prepared to look upon these epic characters as wicked or villainish ; and so, their tragic sorrow and death move us in a way that the ancient or traditional spectator may not have been moved at all. But if epic characters like Duryodhana and Karṇa do not strike us as wicked, as the successors, so to say, of the mythological *asuras*, what is the set of literary values by which we can properly understand their presentation ? There is no doubt, I think, that our emotional response to these characters is governed as much by our own cultural and literary attitudes, as it is determined by the nature of the literary presentation itself.

Whatever the epic picture, Karṇa has always compelled sympathy from the Indian reader down the corridors of time. Bhaṭṭa Nārāyaṇa may have started such a delineation of Karṇa, after Bhāsa. The mystery about Karṇa's birth, the ignominy he had to suffer throughout his life by the stigma of the supposed low birth and upbringing, have always moved us in a tragic and sympathetic way. Bhaṭṭa Nārāyaṇa touches these tender details in his *Veṇīsaṁhāra* ; and so his Karṇa strikes us as a heroic and tragic figure. And to a considerable extent Bhaṭṭa Nārāyaṇa's Duryodhana too moves us emotionally, particularly in his affection and devoted friendship for Karṇa. It is possible that Rabindranath Tagore, a descendant of Bhaṭṭa Nārāyaṇa's family, was similarly affected and created a very sympathetic picture of Karṇa in his *Karṇa-Kuntī-saṁvāda,* and revealed the nobility and tragic grandeur of this unfortunate epic character. Duryodhana has not received similar literary treatment elsewhere; but the possibili-

ties of probing the heroic depth of his character cannot be ignored.

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Bhāsa paints Duryodhana and Karṇa neither as ideal characters nor as villains, but as human heroes who have a stature of their own. He places them in the centre of the dramatic situation, so that the entire attention is focussed on them. The traditional heroes of the epic are either not presented on the stage, or are placed in the background; so that their traditional glamour does not affect the central position of these characters. Such a dramatic design and treatment are not usual in Sanskrit drama. But Bhāsa contrived them both. The compassion he enlists for these central characters is equally unmistakable.

Karṇa is a great figure. The supreme trait of his character is his munificence. He would never disappoint a beggar and send him away empty-handed. He would grant a beggar's wish whatever it might cost him personally. That is how Indra begs him to part with his invincible armour and ear-rings, and Karṇa does so cheerfully. In giving away the *kavaca-kuṇḍalas* Karṇa, in fact, was giving away his precious life. Śalya points out to him that Indra really duped him to part with this gift. But Karṇa is so drunk with his generosity that he feels that he deceived Indra. Indra could not have imagined that Karṇa would gift away the armour and ear-rings which were a saviour of his own life. In making the impossible to happen in reality Karṇa feels a glow of triumph and the satisfaction of having beggared the king of gods. But this turns an uncommon virtue into a fatal weakness; and it makes Karṇa's doom eventually certain. Bhāsa builds his dramatic piece round this event of Karṇa's gift. It is taken out from the original epic context and transplanted on the background of Karṇa's generalship of the war. Bhāsa adds two more touches to make it a central, poignant event : Indra is made to appear on the scene like a greedy, depraved Brahmin; and he speaks in Prakrit like the clown in Sanskrit drama. There is further an angel introduced to make a counter-gift to Karṇa. The role of Indra

and the remorse he feels for having deprived Karṇa of his divine protection both elevate the character of Karṇa and move us with a deep compassion and also with awe at the fatal generosity of Karṇa. This is the central tragic trait of Karṇa's personality; and in building the last moments of his life around it, Bhāsa reveals the whole character of Karṇa and the tragic grandeur of his life.

The other elements in the dramatic design are planned to harmonise with this emotional impact. A sense of premonition hangs over the spectacle. Karṇa's mind is overwhelmed with a burden : the tension of commanding the war at a critical stage; the pressure of memories and promises : it is suggested through the title *Karṇabhāra*. Karṇa enters the scene in a depressed and gloomy mood. The soldier who announces the appearance of Karṇa from behind the curtain is surprised to find the heroic Karṇa in such a mood. But Karṇa is thinking of his blood-relationship with the Pāṇḍavas and the promise he has given to Kunti. He recounts to Śalya the story of Paraśurāma's curse, only to realise that all power has disappeared from his weapons and missiles and his finest steeds have lost their urge and vigour. Śalya, unlike the epic prototype, is very sympathetic and even warns Karṇa against the deception used by Indra. But at this tragic moment the steps that Karṇa is determined to take cannot be retraced. And thus, Karṇa's repeated command to 'drive the chariot where Arjuna is' becomes not only an eloquent symbol of his heroic courage in the face of fatal odds but also of his march to meet his final destiny. The playlet ends on this suggestive note.

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Bhāsa's Duryodhana does not resemble his epic prototype. In the *Dūtavākya* he appears to be very much frightened. His heroic gesture in commanding the assembly to defy Kṛṣṇa, his gloating over the pictures of the dice-match and the humiliation of the Pāṇḍavas and Draupadī, his mortifying attempts to hold Kṛṣṇa a prisoner, all appear to be acts of wickedness. But they are really the outcome of fright. Even a brave and

proud hero can, at some moment, be seized with inner fear. It is human nature. Basically Duryodhana is a proud monarch. It is pride of kingly role and position that has driven him to war. He asserts this in the *Ūrubhaṅga*: 'Pride and honour', he says, 'are the stuff of which kings are made. It is to uphold pride and honour that I have waged this war.' Consistent with this assertion is his belief, expressed in the *Dūta-ghaṭotkaca*, that 'kingdoms cannot be begged as gifts; they have to be won by dint of military valour'. Kingly pride (*māna*) is the keynote to Duryodhana's character. The excess of pride ruins him. His obstinacy, disregard of sane advice and counsel for peaceful settlement of war, some of the wicked acts that he is driven to commit, are all a result of his unchecked pride and his lopsided sense of honour.

But Bhāsa also shows that fate was playing against Duryodhana. There is a suggestion in Bhāsa's account that Duryodhana would not have been conquered by Bhīma had trickery been not used. Bhīma was physically stronger; but Duryodhana was a better and more skilled fighter in mace-duel. At one moment in the duel, when he topples Bhīma down smashing his shoulders, Duryodhana laughs at Bhīmā; but he also assures Bhīma that a true warrior would never strike a fallen adversary. On the whole, therefore, Duryodhana gives a better account of himself as a fighter who honours the code of fighting. And so, it is Duryodhana who compels our admiration and sympathy.

Barring his excessive pride Duryodhana has some very noble traits of character that lift him to the level of magnificence. He is pained to see his wives appearing on the open battlefield bare-headed like common women. He warns them not to grieve over his death, because sorrow does not become *kṣatriya* wives. Bhīma may have succeeded in crushing the thighs of Duryodhana but not his heroic pride and honour. His spirit triumphs in death. Duryodhana is also a loving and obedient son to his parents and his heart melts at the sight and the fond overtures of his little son. The tenderness and affection are an unexpected revelation of Duryodhana's character. It makes him intensely human. We are profoundly touched by his personal tragedy.

In the moment of his death a new awareness comes to Duryodhana. Balarāma thinks that remorse has deprived Duryodhana of his martial spirit and so he is talking of giving up war and vengeance. Actually it is not frustration and despair but the realisation of the futility of pride and fight that has brought Duryodhana to a mood of reconciliation. If hè thinks that the Lord of Universe entered the mace of Bhīma to kill him, it is not an illusion of a dying mind; it is an awareness of a cosmic purpose to fulfil which even the great must lay down their lives. This knowledge, dawning on his mind at the moment of death, enables Duryodhana to reconcile himself with his destiny and meet his Creator with cheerfulness. This awareness also enables him to realise the wrongs that he has done in the wake of his kingly pride. But he has lived like a hero; and he dies a hero. The divine car takes him to the heavens escorted by celestial nymphs and holy rivers. With his death Duryodhana climbs greater heights.

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The kind of hero who is thus exalted but who also has a fatal weakness which finally seals his doom, and a literary composition built round him, are made familiar to us by the Western literature and its theory of tragedy.

The Western tragedy is a story of an exalted character. He is remarkable in a number of ways and is thereby above the level of common humanity. He, however, adopts a course of action which brings him into terrible conflict with an established order of political-social life, or with cosmic forces which do not brook any wrong being done. The entire story moves round such a conflict and ends with the death of the hero. One of the qualities that the hero possesses is the firmness of his own stand. He defies the forces of opposition. He does not deviate from the course of his action even if it brings him untold misery and agony. Sometimes he realises the error of his action, sometimes not; and occasionally the realisation comes too late, almost at the moment of dying. Yet, he courageously marches towards the end and faces

death heroically. It also happens that the characters are victims of an adverse destiny. Nemesis takes hold of them, though they may not have done any real wrong. Such a spectacle rouses a variety of emotions. There is naturally 'pity' or sympathy for the agonies the hero suffers; there is also 'terror' or awe at the trail of waste, blood, disaster and death that the story leaves; there is at the same time deep admiration for the uncommon courage that the hero continuously shows in meeting disaster, in his suffering and in finally accepting death. There is a sublimity that the hero reaches which lifts the spectator also on a higher level of humanity.

This is the picture of Greek tragedy. Shakespeare alters the tune a little, by placing the source of the terrible conflict in the character of the hero himself. Shakespeare's tragic heroes have a fatal weakness in them : like overmastering ambition, jealousy, too much thinking that destroys the spring of action, too much trustworthiness that drives one to lunacy. It is such a trait of character that ultimately destroys them, often bringing the death of innocent persons connected with them.

Bhāsa's Duryodhana and Karṇa resemble very closely such a tragic hero and the two plays are so designed as to match the Western conception of tragedy.

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The unusual characterization in the Bhāsa plays cannot fully be explained with the theory of *rasa* and the response to *karuṇa*. We are unable to use these principles for two reasons: One is that there is much more in these pictures of Duryodhana and Karṇa than mere pathos. Their heroic stand in sticking to their own course of action, their courage, resignation and determination is going out to meet their inevitable destiny, some very noble traits of humanity that they display, these evoke admiration, awe and sublimity. These responses are not the usual accompaniment of *karuṇa rasa*. And so, the *rasa* theory would not be sufficient to explain them. The second reason is that the sympathetic

response to sorrow is usually possible in the case of the ideal heroes of Sanskrit literature. Purūravas, Duṣyanta, Rāma, Sītā, Aja, Daśaratha are sueh heroes who suffer in their lives, and suffer intensely. Their sorrow moves us. Their sufferings are explained as due to adverse destiny, due to something that happened in their previous births for which they must do the necessary recompense; or it is due to an unfortunate curse which they did not deserve. In all such happenings, therefore, the sufferings of these great men and women are short-lived, however acute they may be. A compassionate response to such sorrow is quite natural and is assured. But the greatness and goodness of these characters are also asserted. And so, the story of their suffering never ends in disaster or death. On the contrary, its happy end is promised from the beginning. The entire literary design moves towards re-union and happiness, even if the way is through misery and agony. This is what happens in plays like *Svapna-vāsavadatta*, *Vikramorvaśīya*, *Śākuntala*, *Mṛcchakaṭika* and *Uttara-rāma-carita*. In these plays the theme is of union, separation and re-union. The period of separation is marked by sorrow and suffering. But the theme does not terminate with separation and sorrow. The Sanskrit dramatists are careful to plan a happy end. Sometimes a dramatist like Bhavabhūti goes against the original epic story to ensure the re-union of Rāma and Sītā and close his moving dramatic spectacle on a perfect note of happiness.

The death of a hero is alien to Sanskrit dramaturgy. In literary compositions of the epic or fiction type, death of a principal character is occasionally shown; as, for instance, in Kālidāsa's *Raghuvaṁśa*, where Indumatī dies suddenly and Aja commits suicide some time later; or in Bāṇa's *Kādambarī*, where Puṇḍarīka, Mahāśveta, Candrāpīḍā leave one existence and enter on another birth. But in these compositions also re-union and happiness are promised and shown, if not in one existence, then in heaven or in another existence.

This is not to suggest that the Sanskrit writers are not aware of the sorrow and misery of human existence. They do show them with feeling and poetic grace in their writings. But they do not accept a tragic denouement. At best, there

is death of a beloved person and the consequent lament (*vilāpa*). Rati, Aja, Rāma mourn with a broken heart for the death or loss of their beloved partners of life; Jagannatha writes *Karuṇā-vilāsa* to express lament over the death of the beloved. These literary pieces are, however, a poetic rendering of human sorrow and their impact is emotionally limited to the *karuṇa*. In other words, the Sanskrit literature has *karuṇa rasa* in full measure, but *no tragedy*, where the death of a hero or a heroine ends the story and the literary piece evokes a mixed emotional response.

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This seems to have happened by a set of causes. The dramatic theory in Sanskrit prohibits the tragic end of a story. Bharata enjoined the rule that the death of a hero was never to be shown, as it would interrupt the emotional continuity of a play and terminate its emotional appeal (*rasa*) for the spectator. The precept of Bharata is accepted by later theorists. Ānandavardhana deals with this literary problem of appeal and enjoyment (*rasāsvāda*) and points out that, for ensuring a steady emotional response, a hero must not be shown to die; and if the context of the story demanded such a death, as in the case of Indumatī and Aja, the promise of happy reunion of the lovers, separated by death, must be assured. Obviously the Sanskrit writers accepted the theoretical direction and designed their writings to display the full extent of pathos (*karuṇa-rasa*) but avoided tragic ending, thereby ensuring that their literary creation, especially the drama, would delight the audience and leave them in a mood of happiness.

There is yet another cause and it goes beyond literary theory deeper into a people's outlook on life. It is determined by religion and philosophy which mould human life. The Hindu view of life looks upon death as a necessary phase in the cycle of the Universe, and religion and philosophy teach man not to mourn what is necessary and unavoidable. Death, in this view, may lead naturally to sorrow but it is not an end of human existence. The wise, therefore, have no lament

either for life or for death.[1] Besides, it is also a principle that the good and the virtuous will never suffer. If they do so, the suffering is temporary: it is either a test of their virtue or integrity, or a consequence of *karman* in their previous lives. The doctrine of *karman* also promises that the punishment and sorrow would always be just and proportionate to the wrong deed. It holds out hope equally that a man can improve his present life in the light of his experiences and reach perfection. For, God is impartial, just and kind, and would never abandon a devoted worker for spiritual salvation.[2]

A kind and beneficent philosophy of this nature and the sympathetic religious practices it suggests, give a new perspective on human misery and death. In actual life sorrow is to be endured with patience and faith hoping for the ultimate good. In literature sorrow can be poetically rendered; and we are expected to appreciate the art of delineation and respond with appropriate *karuṇa* reaction. The theory of *rasa* and its *āsvāda* presupposes these values of life derived from the religious and philosophical outlook. To this is added the literary value of enjoyment. Literature delights and pleases; and this in practice has meant that all literary compositions must end on a note of hope and joy, happiness and bliss.

The Sanskrit dramatic theory provides neither for the death of a hero, nor for the conception of a hero who is great and exalted but is human enough to have some foibles and weaknessess which may lead him to erroneous action and ultimately land him in doom or disaster. The hero is conceived on idealistic lines as a representative of set qualities. There may be set-backs for him; but error and frustration are not possible. The theory of literary construction is similarly devised. A composition is designed to show, through developing stages, an accomplishment of a desire or an idea on the part of a hero; and it is to end with the actual fruit of achievement. It is, therefore, inconceivable that a hero would strive to achieve disaster or death. Some reasons why Sanskrit literature has *karuṇa rasa* but no formal tragedy are to be found here.

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We are thus back at our initial problem of explaining the nature of emotional response to the two Bhāsa plays. There is an overall outlook of the Vedānta philosophy which teaches that death is a reality and life, an illusion.[3] Will such an outlook help solving problems of literature and aesthetics ? I am afraid, it cannot. For, not only the two plays under discussion but all literature and human activity is then a spiritual tragedy as long as we are lingering on the joys and sorrows of human life and removing ourselves from the Supreme reality of Brahman.

We are, thus, placed in a literary dilemma: We have to reject Duryodhana and Karṇa as the dramatic heroes of these plays; in which case pathos and sympathy are ruled out. Alternatively, if our emotional responses were to guide us we will have to accept them as tragic heroes; and in this case the explanation of the literary phenomenon will have to come from a different world of literary and cultural values, because the cannons and conventions of Sanskrit poetic theory cannot cover it.[4]

The playwrights that came after Bhāsa did not use such a perspective on the tragic potentialities of human character and human situation. The theory of dramaturgy did not favour literary experiments of this kind. Bhāsa, therefore, remained an isolated dramatist who wrote a tragedy. To an art-minded student, however, the *Ūrubhaṅga* and the *Karṇabhāra* will be the glory of Sanskrit Literature.

References

1. Cf. *Gītā*, II. 11 : '*gatāsūn agatāsūṅśca nānuśocanti paṇḍitāḥ*' /
2. Cf. again, *Gītā*, IX 31: '*na me bhaktaḥ praṇaśyati*' /
3. (Cf. '*Maraṇam prakṛtiḥ śarīriṇām vikṛtir jīvitamucyate* /')
4. For 'Theory of drama' consult my *Bharata-Nāṭya-Mañjarī*, and *Naṭya-Mañjarī-Saurabha* (Sanskrit Dramatic Theory) Bhandarkar Institute, Poona, 1975 and 1981; for 'the problem of tragedy', my *Tragedy and Sanskrit Drama*, Popular Prakashan, Bombay, 1974.

4

THE TRIVANDRUM PLAYS

A Review of the Problem

[1]

Sanskrit literature, both creative and critical, recognises Bhāsa as an ancient dramatist who had achieved a decided literary success and won public and critical approbation. Kālidāsa mentions the 'compositions' of Bhāsa. Bāṇa records some special features of Bhāsa's plays and his winning of the 'banner' of competitive success. Vākpatirāja, who belongs to the same seventh century A.D. as Bāṇa, describes Bhāsa as a 'friend of fire'. Rājaśekhara states that Bhāsa's *Svapnavāsavadatta*, stood unscathed against the fire of severe critical test. Jayadeva, the author of the *Prasannarāghava*, twelfth century A.D., describes Bhāsa as 'the laughter' of the Muse of poetry. An anthology verse in the *Śārṅgadharapaddhati* gives a list of several authors, including Bhāsa. In the same way several writers on poetics like Vāmana, Abhinavagupta, Bhojadeva, Śāradātanaya, Rāmacandra-Guṇacandra refer to Bhāsa and his play *Svapnavāsavadatta*. It is presumable therefore that since the times of Kālidāsa down to the fourteenth-fifteenth century A.D. the plays of Bhāsa were known to the people and were probably seen in stage representation and were certainly read.

But then the plays of Bhāsa disappeared mysteriously and the name of Bhāsa survived only in the earlier literary references. The phrase 'friend of fire' and the idea of the 'fire-test' of Bhāsa plays may have created the belief that the manuscripts were either burnt down in an accidental fire or

that the author burned them himself. The belief further created a halo of mystery and romance round the name of Bhāsa and his plays.

A trace of the lost plays was found in the beginning of this century when the late MM.T. Ganapathi Shastri, the then Curator of the Travancore Manuscripts Library, discovered some palm-leaf Mss. of Sanskrit plays written in Malayalam characters, which he believed to be the long lost Bhāsa plays. He published them in the Trivandrum Sanskrit Series from 1912 to 1917 A.D. and in his prefaces made out a strong case for their authenticity and genuineness.

The reactions of the scholarly world to the Trivandrum publications could only be described as mixed. The joy over the discovery of *Bhāsa-nāṭaka-cakra* was soon drowned in the bewildering controversy to which the publication gave rise. The scholars and critics appeared to be divided into two opposite camps, pro-Bhāsa and anti-Bhāsa; there were solitary figures who assumed a halting attitude and were prone to adopt a middle course and undertake the study of the Trivandrum plays independently as literary compositions. The dust of the controversy has settled down with the passage of years. Yet, I believe, the atmosphere of doubt persists and there still are a good many people who are not prepared to accept the authenticity of these plays and Bhāsa's authorship of them.

Why is it really that we are not willing to accept the Trivandrum plays as genuine ? It will be worthwhile to re-examine major arguments advanced so far and re-tread the ground covered earlier. We may not be able to settle the controversy. But we could at least clarify some issues in the light of new critical material made available during the past years and be able to define our approach to these plays more precisely and more objectively.

[2]

The South Indian scholars, who were the first to write about Kerala Theatre and the production of Sanskrit plays by the traditional actors of Kerala, have made certain

statements which have the effect apparently of nullifying Ganapathi Shastri's claim about the genuineness of the Trivandrum plays. For example :

(a) It is stated that the plays belong to the repertoire of the Cākyārs, the traditional actors of Kerala.

Taken in isolation this statement may imply that the plays were collected from the Cākyārs in Mss. form and were published as the Bhāsa plays. Such an implication, however, would be utterly wrong. I visited Kerala in the summer of 1950. I had some personal discussion with the then Maharaja of Cochin, His Highness Shri Parikshit Varma, who was a great Sanskrit scholar, and who kindly arranged for me two performances of Sanskrit and Traditional plays in a temple and at the palace in Ernakulam, Cochin. Later, I visited the Manuscripts Library at Travancore and the Director, Dr. Pillai, showed me the palm-leaf Mss. from which Ganapathi Shastri edited and published the plays. While, therefore, the Cākyārs could very well possess Mss. of these and other Sanskrit plays or of isolated acts drawn from them, as a dramatic troupe is bound to have its own copies of performing scripts, the Mss. of the Trivandrum plays which Ganapathi Shastri published were independently discovered in the palace library at Travancore. A catalogue of Mss. has also been published now by the Travancore Manuscripts Library and the titles of Bhāsa plays are listed in it. It is not correct, therefore, to continue to hold a suspicion that Mss. *as such* are spurious.

(b) The Trivandrum plays show certain formal characteristics which are not found in the common run of classical Sanskrit plays: (i) The stage direction *Nāndyante tataḥ praviśati Sūtradhāraḥ* / comes at the very beginning of the script and is followed by a verse which looks like a *nāndī*. (ii) The introduction or prologue is very short; it does *not* mention the name of the play and of the author; it is usually effected by one character, the Sūtradhāra, and introduces a character or characters in the opening scene. (iii) The dramatic device used for opening the main scene (*kin-nu khalu mayi vijñāpanavyagre śabda iva śrūyate / aṅga paśyāmi /*) is nearly the same in all the plays with a few exceptions (e.g. the

Cārudatta). (iv) The prologue, unlike that in the Classical plays, is called *Sthāpanā*. (v) The *Bharatavākya* or the Valedictory stanza is nearly identical in these plays. In some plays the *nāndī* and/or the *Bharatavākya* are missing.

Now, it is stated that these formal characteristics belong to the South Indian plays. The traditional actors of Kerala who possess these plays have a habit of acting 'only select scenes, never a drama in full'. They present these with 'select introductions'. The similarity or uniformity of the prologues is due to the work of 'editing for stage purposes' on the part of the Cākyārs. Thus the plays are 'abridgements of original or modelled on Bhāsa works, but not the original plays'. The fact that the name of the author is omitted in the introduction shows that 'the writers were plagiarists or adapters and so remained anonymous'.

These statements need a serious re-examination. Granting that the formal features and the dramatic technique found in Trivandrum plays are also found in South Indian plays, what compelling reason is there to assume, as it has been tacitly done, that South Indian writers effected the characteristics and techniques ? What ground actually exists to deny that they themselves were affected by Bhāsa technique, which they imitated and copied, considering that the tradition of Sanskrit plays is pretty older than that of the South Indian play-writing ? If the similarity were due to mutual influence, the certain possibility that the Kerala theatre was affected by the old, classical dramatic practice cannot be conveniently brushed aside.

During the recent years an intensive study of the *Bharata Nāṭyaśātra* has thrown a new light on the technique of dramatic performance. The *Nāṭyāśāstra* prescribes the performance of a *purvāraṅga* before the actual staging of a play.[1] This consists of 19 items. The first 8 or 9 are merely musical items connected with preparation; the items from *utthāpanā* or *nāndi* to *mahācārī* are again partly of religious or ritual significance. The last two items *trigata* and *prarocanā* are really concerned with the introduction of the play and an appeal to the spectators. Besides, according to a practice found in the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, the Sthāpaka who

resembled the Sūtradhāra came forward to introduce the play and the playwright. The business of the Sthāpaka is described by Bharata as *raṅga-prasādana, Kavi-nāma-saṁkīrtana* and *Kāvyaprastāvanā.*[2] It is obvious therefore that the introduction of the poet by his name, of the play and its plot, were part of the set dramatic practice of the *pūrvaraṅga* itself. If therefore we do not find the names of the poet and of the play mentioned in the Trivandrum plays, the obvious conclusion is that they belonged to this pre-classical stage of dramatic production. The similarity and the set character of these prologues are therefore connected with the early *pūrvaraṅga* practice and not with the Kerala Theatre or the Cākyārs.

It is also clear from the *Nāṭyaśāstra* that Bharata himself recommended curtailment of the elaborate *pūrvaraṅga* so that the audience might be spared boredom and the actors fatigue. This prescription is fully suggestive of the fact that the performance of *pūrvaraṅga* must have gone through definite stages of curtailment till the prologue and the preliminaries acquired the character known to us from the plays of Kālidāsa down the centuries of classical Sanskrit play-writing. I had postulated long back at least three of such stages of development.[3] Dr. Feistel in his recent study of *pūrvaraṅga*[4] suggests four : the first that of the *Bharatapūrvaraṅga*, the last of the classical usage. In between are two stages : the second where the Sūtradhāra himself took over the duties of the Sthāpaka of introducing the play and where the prologue was changed into a conversation; the third stage showed shortening of the musical preliminaries; the Sūtradhāra recited the *nāndī* behind the curtain and then entered; this differed from the classical usage "by the fact that the mention of the play and playwright took place still behind the backdrop curtain before the *sūtradhāra* entered".[5] It appears very reasonable to assume that the Bhāsa plays belong to the second or the third stage of *pūrvaraṅga* practice, and that is the reason why the prologues are so different from those in classical plays.

As regards the other features : (i) The stage direction *nāndyante* etc. which comes at the beginning of the script is

really speaking, a mannerism of writing only. The South Indian scribes, as Dr. Feistel remarks,[6] have the habit of placing the stage direction at the beginning and this they have done while copying "even some of Kālidāsa's plays". It has therefore no real significance. (ii) The verse that follows this stage direction has been mistaken as the *nāndī* verse : 'mistaken' because during the stage of the dramatic practice to which the Bhāsa plays belong the set *nāndī* of the *pūrvaraṅga* was used and it was sung (so to say) behind the curtain. The verse which appears in the beginning of the Bhāsa plays is really a *prarocanā* (the last item of the *pūrvaraṅga* before the *prastāvanā*).[7] As per definition of the NS. the *prarocanā* is intended as an invitation for success of the play; it involves auspicious invocation. This is obtained by the blessings sought of a deity. The *prarocanā* is also to hint at the plot of the play. This is done by double-meaning phrases using the names of dramatic characters. (iii) The short *prastāvanā* too belongs to the older pre-classical stage. The fact that the majority of the plays are introduced by the Sūtradhāra alone indicates that the *prastāvanā* belongs to the second stage of *pūrvaraṅga*. Gradually the Sūtradhāra was assisted by the Pāripārśvika or Naṭī. The introduction of the *Cārudatta* now need not puzzle us. In the older *pūrvaraṅga trigata* was the item (the last but one, before *prarocanā*) where the author and the play were suggestively introduced; in this item the Vidūṣaka took a leading part;[8] and according to the dramatic convention he would speak Prakrit as the Naṭī also would do. (iv) The possibility that the *prastāvanā* was done by the Sthāpaka and the Sūtradhāra retired with his two assistants after the *pūrvaraṅga* items were presented is envisaged by the *Nāṭyaśāstra*. It is likely that Bhāsa adopted the practice of assigning this function to Sūtradhāra himself instead of using a separate Sthāpaka. Bāṇa's observation, therefore, that the Bhāsa plays were *Sūtradhāra-kṛta-āraṁbha* acquires now a corroborative significance; for, in the first stage of the *pūrvaraṅga* practice, the dramatic introduction was *Sthāpaka-kṛta-āraṁbha*.[9]

When the phase of the classical development commenced, the *nāndī* and *prastāvanā* were taken over by the playwright

himself. This dramatic practice accounts for the individual variations found in the classical plays from Kālidāsa onwards. It also explains why the writers were obliged to bring their name and that of the play in the dramatic script itself. This was so, because due to the curtailment of the prescribed *pūrvaraṅga* in its final stage, there was no provision left for *Kavināmasaṁkīrtana* and *kāvya-upakṣepa*.

(c) No one, I believe, entertains the view today that the Trivandrum plays are forgeries. Yet the opinion that the plays are not the original writings but only 'stage versions or scripts' adapted for stage purposes seems to persist. It is worthwhile therefore to examine what a stage version of a play really means. An almost invariable experience in this connection is that a stage version of a written play is prepared in order to accommodate the performing time of a play for particular occasions and/or to enhance the impact of stage production on the spectators. Such a version is prepared by omitting scenes, unnecessary speeches, long passages, words and songs if any. While doing this curtailment care is always taken to preserve the original script. If omission of scenes or amalgamation of acts resulted in a break of continuity or loss of links of story development some words or sentences are added. Occasionally some new songs may be added for entertainment or for giving greater scope to an actor in the particular play-production. In all this attempt to work over a script by some omissions or a few necessary additions, the objective is never to change the very face of a play but only to increase its stage value. A stage version or adaptation therefore does not *essentially* differ from the original play. For, in spite of the omissions and additions, what remains in the script is what the author originally wrote. The stage version of a play and the abridgement of a book are two entirely different things : In abridging a book the precis-writer retains only the points and arguments of the original author; but the precis he prepares is done in *his own words;* so that while a short version of a book retains only the substance of the book, its *text* is prepared by the hand of the precis-writer. This is *not* the process used in preparing the stage version of a play : The dialogue and verses retained in

the stage version actually belong to the original. I am afraid the critics who have banked on the notion of stage version have either no connection with or are ignorant of stage practice and the business of play-production.

Besides, a mere actor or a troupe of actors does never undertake the work of preparing a stage version of a play accepted for production. The present day practice is that a director/producer discusses the changes which he wants with the playwright; and it is the original author who rewrites dialogues or scenes. When the original writer is not available, whatever the reason, another *writer* is invited to work over the script. In other words, preparing a stage version or adaptation of a play is a writer's business and obligation; and an actor or director could take up the work only if he happened to be a writer in his own right.

The general experience about the actors' part in play production is that they are basically responsible artists and always strive their best to present the original author's words and dialogue faithfully and skilfully. An actor who disregarded the original script and improvised his own speeches would be treated as an irresponsible actor and would cease to have a growing stage career. I have witnessed myself dramatic presentations given by Kerala actors. They have an individual method of staging a Sanskrit play. In between the Sanskrit speeches of a play, the actor who presents the play (in the production that I saw, the Viduṣaka) intersperses comments in the native tongue and these are topical, generally set, but sometimes skilfully improvised also in order to be up-to-date. These comments which are humorous and entertaining are like those of a *Harikathākāra* and outside the original text of the play. However, the actual dramatic speeches very faithfully follow the original Sanskrit text and I verified this part of presentation by comparing it to the printed text in my hand, although I could not follow a word of the native Malyalam comment. To entertain the notion therefore that the Cākyārs distorted the original Bhāsa plays in their select presentation of individual scenes or acts or in adapting the plays for stage performances would not only be a travesty of facts, it would also be a

thoroughly undeserved slur on the integrity and responsibility of traditional actors.

We are thus reasonably driven to the conclusion that the Bhāsa plays, even if they were stage versions, are quite close to the original ; and the hand behind the changes or adaptations, if any, must be that of a dramatic *writer*.

[3]

(a) Supposed quotation from Bhāsa are known to appear in some Śāstric or rhetorical works and in the anthologies. These quotations do not verbally tally with the text of the Trivandrum plays. While scholars therefore agree about the authenticity of the *name* of Bhāsa, some of them refuse to accept the authenticity of the *plays* themselves. On the face of it this amounts to placing greater credence on the authority of rhetoricians and anthologists, that is to say, on literary critics and compilers, rather than on the manuscripts of the plays themselves. In principle, such a procedure is an unsound piece of literary criticism. We often find that a verse or a passage quoted in anthologies as coming from a Kālidāsa or a Bhaṭṭa Nārāyaṇa is not found in the original author's work. In all such cases our literary critics discredit the anthologist or compiler and never say that the work of Kālidāsa or that of some author who is quoted is spurious. It is curious that this process should be reversed in the case only of Bhāsa ! Many Sanskrit works, like the plays of Kā idāsa for instance, exist not only in several manuscripts but also in different versions. It is possible therefore to argue that a certain passage, if found to be genuine, must exist in some version which was available to the commentator or compiler and which perhaps is lost to us. If such a presumption is sound, why should it not be accepted in the case of Trivandrum plays ?

(b) Besides it is necessary to remember that our ancient commentators, critics and compilers did not use the modern method of checking and verifying the original sources before incorporating any quotation. They relied only on the information that was available to them and on their memory.

Sometimes the quotations are accurate and the source is correct. But often it is not so. Sometimes a quoted passage agrees with the substance but does not verbally tally with the original. Many commentators and critics have also the habit of introducing abbreviations which, they did not know, should have been explained first. For instance, Viśvanātha refers to the *Veṇīsaṁhāra* in his *Sāhityadarpaṇa* as *Veṇī* and Ghanaśyāma refers to Kālidāsa as Bhartṛmeṇtha. Students of Sanskrit literature are aware of the mess that inaccuracies of commentators and of traditions have created. But while our critics do not seem to rush to any conclusions about an author or his work only on the evidence of some ancient literary testimony, they have apparently shown unqualified trust in it so far as the Bhāsa plays are concerned. This is unsound critical approach, to say the least.

(c) Recently Dr. Unni (Sanskrit Department, University of Kerala) undertook an extensive search for the Bhāsa manuscripts and has brought to light several of them. All these Mss. are discovered in Kerala and apparently belong to the collection of the native traditional actors. In his published book[10] Dr Unni gives details about the Mss. and writes elaborately about the stage procedure and production techniques used in the performance of these plays. Among the Mss. there is one of *Avimāraka*, in which the scribe has written the author's name as "Kātyā..."; Dr. Unni deciphers this as Kātyāyana and concludes that *Avimāraka* is not a Bhāsa play. It is further presumed that, since Kātyāyana wrote *Avimāraka* the other Trivandrum plays must similarly be written by other unknown writers. Bhāsa's authorship is, thus, once again denied on the basis of an abrupt Ms. evidence.

I am reminded of the Ms. of *Mālatīmādhava* which S.P. Pandit discovered and in which the name of the author, given in colophons to acts iii and vi, was Uṁveka. This led to the inferences that Uṁveka, a pupil of Kumārila Bhaṭṭa, was the author of *Mālatīmādhava*, and that he must be identical with Bhavabhūti. While some scholars welcomed the inference about the author's identity, others exercised

caution and refused to accept the evidence of a single Ms. as conclusive.

Other Ms. evidence is available in the case of Bhavabhūti's plays for critical comparison. Bhāsa seems to have no such luck. But while scholars are inclined to exercise extreme caution about the evidence of manuscripts, the Bhāsa plays are denied such caution. It appears that South Indian scholars are determined to discredit the genuineness and the authorship of the Trivandrum plays. Dr Unni, for instance, attributes *Avimāraka* to Kātyāyana on the evidence of a single Ms. and a half-written name; and some scholars are too eager to accept this conclusion; no one is prepared to consider even the possibilities of a scribal error, conjecture or heresy information.

As the name of Bhāsa has been remembered and preserved in Indian tradition for a long time it is not illogical to assume that the Bhāsa plays must have existed in several manuscripts and also in slightly varying versions. How these plays came to be lost and preserved perhaps only in Kerala is a mystery which defies solution at present. If one is permitted a conjecture one may think of unsettled political conditions in which the dramatist lived. The general picture and especially the epilogue verses in the Trivandrum plays point to uncertain, disturbed political life. More important possibly are the facts that Bhāsa is very unorthodox in his treatment of the Rāmāyaṇa and Mahābhārata stories, and in his delineation of the so-called wicked characters from the epics; he also uses stage technique which is at variance with the Bharata Nāṭyaśāstra. The bold handling of the epic stories and characters may not have found favour with changing times, current popular trends and settled attitudes of the people. And so, while some lovers of dramatic art still cherished the Bhāsa plays, the general populace neglected them ; the Mss. were not cared for and gradually came to disappear from the northern and central regions of India. Somehow, they found refuge in southern India, which was a land of different language and culture. The legendary account of the Bhāsa plays, the story of their 'burning in fire' may be figuratively descriptive of the orthodox, conservative attitude of the people

towards these plays and their withdrawal from general circulation.

(d) The argument drawn from the unequal merit of the Bhāsa plays and from certain passages which create chronological difficulties comes in the same category. No two works of any writer are of equal merit. The *Mālavikāgnimitra*, for example, is far inferior to the *Abhijñānaśākuntala*. Do we conclude therefore that the play is not Kālidāsa's work and is wrongly attributed to him ? This is exactly what some critics are doing about some Bhāsa plays. They may argue that other independent evidence about correct authorship is available in the case of other works, like those of Kālidāsa, but such evidence does not exist for Bhāsa plays. While admitting this inevitable fact one would still have to say that, in the absence of such evidence, independent, objective literary analysis and literary judgment based on it are always available for an open-minded critic. Is one to infer that these critics lack literary judgment ?

(e) In old days, interpolations in mss. were always possible. That does not however make the basic work spurious or of doubtful authenticity. Personification of Viṣṇu's weapons occurs in two Bhāsa plays (*Dūtavākya*, *Bālacarita*) and in the vision of Kārtyāyanī in the *Bālacarita* the goddess is identified with Kālī who killed Śuṁbha and Niśuṁbha. Critics say that these ideas and beliefs are of a later date and do not synchronize with the supposed time-period of Bhāsa. Conclusion ? These plays are not Bhāsa's ! This is like arguing that, because some legends and ideas in the Mahābhārata and the Rāmāyaṇa are decidedly late, the epics therefore in their present form are not the works of Vyāsa and Vālmīki !

As a matter of fact, if certain passages in the Bhāsa plays were definitely proved to be of a later date, it could be a case of interpolation or revision by another literary hand to make the play as contemporary as possible to entertain the public. A spurious passage does not make the whole work spurious. Similarly we must naturally suppose that Bhāsa's career as a playwright was spread over a long period of time. The plays belong to different periods of literary activity. If they

do not possess identical merit it is naturally to be so expected. The stamp of maturity and great skill will be visible only on certain plays.

In the case of those plays which lack the opening *nāndī* (?) or the *Bharatavākya*, it is reasonable to assume that the manuscript is incomplete ; and we cannot do anything about it as no additional mss. evidence is likely to be found.

[4]

In literary writing similarities in the use of certain words or phrases, turns of expression, grammatical and stylistic peculiarities and use of certain stage directions or devices in dramatic script cannot necessarily be the basis to assume common authorship. These can be imitated. What goes to the core of the matter, however, is an artist's conception of a theme, his design of development, his insight into characters and the outlook he has on life. This is characteristically individual and difficult to be imitated. The imitation will not generally escape the close scrutiny of a discerning, careful critic. In the absence of the mention of the author's name[11] and that of the play in the prologue, and for want of other mss. of the plays for comparison, the only possible approach left to us is to study the plays objectively and without bias or pre-conceived notions and try to find out if they reveal similarities, not external, of language and style, but of an inner vision.

The thirteen Trivandrum plays fall into different groups according to the source-story presented in dramatic form. The plays within a particular group, like the Rāmāyaṇa or the Mahābhārata plays, possess such remarkable similarities that their common authorship cannot reasonably be doubted. The critics, it seems, are divided in their opinion about the common authorship of plays in different groups and of the thirteen plays together forming the so-called *Bhāsa nāṭakacakra*.

(i) But it is interesting to note that most of the plays revolve round the idea of loss and regaining of kingdom or claim to a kingdom. This motive is implicit in the Mahābhā-

rata stories, especially as it is presented in the *Pañcarātra*. But the Rāmāyaṇa plays are also built round this theme. In the *Svapnavāsavadatta* the central theme has a double aspect : restoration of the separated Vāsavadattā and of the usurped kingdom to Udayana. In *Pratijñā*, it is a question of bringing back the captured king. The motive is not central in some other plays and yet it figures in the dramatic story ; In the *Avimāraka*, the ending of the curse lifts the ban of untouchability on the hero and his king-father ; and it also restores their kingdom to them. The death of Kaṁsa restores the legitimate king Ugrasena to the throne and this political declaration is significantly made towards the close of the play, *Bālacarita*. It is difficult to believe, at least from the point of view literary creation, that different minds could have conceived such a remarkably identical motive for shaping dramatic plots.

(ii) The author of these plays seems to take enormous liberties in moulding his dramatic story although it is drawn from well-known traditional sources. The *Pratimā* deviates at places from the *Rāmāyaṇa* ; *Pañcarātra* shoves the very epic war into non-existence ; the *Dūta Ghaṭotkaca* and *Madhyavyāyoga* are pure inventions, although the context and characters are authentic.

(iii) Similar freedom of presentation is noticed in certain scenes like those of dream, sleep, night adventure, actual wrestling and fight and death of dramatic characters on the stage. The *Nāṭyaśāstra* expressly forbids the showing of such scenes and the classical writers respect Bharata's injunction. The author of these plays is either a rebel or belonged to an early period of time, before the dramatic conventions commenced to rule the Sanskrit stage. But the bold and artistic presentation has given us a series of unusual and unique scenes and two small tragedies (*Ūrubhaṅga*, *Karṇabhāra*) which tragedy, as a dramatic form, does not exist in the entire range of Sanskrit drama.[12]

(iv) The writer of these plays is generally inclined to develop his dramatic plot not by piling a series of incidents but by probing the mind of his characters and revealing the emotional impacts of their inner being. Some plays like the

Abhiṣeka and the *Bālacarita* to some extent grow by external happenings. On a literary principle such plays could be assigned to early periods of a writer's creative effort. But many other plays like the *Svapnavāsavadatta* and the *Pratimā* are marked by a deep psychological insight. And it results in a very unique presentation of such characters as Duryodhana, Kaṁsa, Vālin and Kaikeyī. These are regarded as wicked characters or villains in the tradition ; but this author treats them as thoroughly human ; so that a deep understanding and compassion are evoked for them. Such portraiture is again unique and, considering that the characters come from different groups of plays, compels the belief that it must be the work of a single remarkable artist.

(v) These plays show some novel experiments in the area of play-building and play-production. As literary pieces we have here one-act, three-act, four-act and the usual five to seven acts plays. There is a play (*Dūtavākya*) which is entirely in Sanskrit, without Prakrit-speaking characters, and a prologue (*Cārudatta*) which is in Prakrit. The plots are drawn from the epics and popular legends ; but there is also a touch of the social play (*Cārudatta*, *Avimāraka*). By way of stage production we have here the concretization of a dream (*Bālacarita*), human presentation of Divine weapons (*Bālacarita*, *Dūtavākya*), scene of a whole assembly by mimic presentation (*Dūtavākya*), and simultaneous scenes which run into each other (*Svapnavāsavadatta*, *Cārudatta*). This is also a mark of an inventive artist. Such experiments which show a kind of consistency and a plan cannot be assigned to different writers.

With this evidence before us it is reasonable to assume a common authorship of the Trivandrum plays. The critics who cannot be satisfied except by *Sūrya-Jayadratha-nyāya* will, I am afraid, be disappointed because such evidence is never likely to be unearthed now. But once we have found a way to properly explain the formal features of these plays, made allowances for possible interpolations and omissions of expected material in them, and for the doubtful authority of literary quotations from them, the similarity of artistic conception and design found in these plays is bound to stagger

us in the face. We accept *Svapnavāsavadatta* as a Bhāsa play: I have mentioned similarities which all the plays, including the *Svapnavāsavadatta*, share together. Principles of literary criticism (which is our only possible approach in the circumstances) should persuade us to accept a single authorship of the *nāṭaka-carkra*. And if so, that author is Bhāsa.

References

1. *Nāṭyaśastra* (NS.) Gaekwad's Oriental Series (GOS), Vol. 1, ch. 5.
2. See NS., GOS. V. 160-169.
3. See "Prologues in the Bhāsa plays" in my *Bhāsa-Studies* ; pp. 71-85 ; Maharashtra Granth Bhandar, Kolhapur, 1968. Also, my *Bharata-nāṭya-mañjarī*, Introduction.
4. "The Pūrvaraṅga and the chronology of pre-classical Sanskrit Theatre" by Dr Hartmut-Ortwin Feistel, in *Sanskrit Raṅga-Annual*, VI (Special Felicitation Volume in honour of Dr. Raghavan) : Madras. 1972 ; pp. 1-26.
5. Fiestel, *Ibid*., p. 14.
6. *Ibid*., p. 20.
7. See, NS, GOS., V. 29 ; 135.
8. See, my *The Vidūṣaka* : The New Order Book Co., Ahmedabad, 1959; chapter X, describing the function and role of the Vidūṣaka in *pūrvaraṅga*; pp. 109-115.
9. See, "Bāṇa's Tribute to Bhāsa" in my *Bhāsa-Studies, op. cit ;* pp. 127-138.
10. *New Problems in Bhāsa Plays :* College Book House, Trivandrum ; 1978.
11. Mention of an author's name in itself is not of much value in the ancient Indian tradition. Works are incorrectly ascribed to authors who did not write them. Witness, for example, the several works which tradition mentions as Kālidāsa's.
12. See my *Tragedy and Sanskrit Drama*, Popular Prakashan, Bombay, 1974.

5

KĀLIDĀSA'S FIRST PLAY

Mālavikāgnimitra is Kālidāsa's first play. Yet considered by itself and as a drama, it shows some special traits of Kālidāsa's writing. The familiar trend of Sanskrit literature is the choice of a purāṇic or legendary tale and its romantic or idealistic treatment. Kālidāsa follows this trend in his following two plays. But here he has chosen to paint the private life of an historical king. King Agnimitra is attracted towards a beautiful young harem maid. His two queens naturally oppose his game of love. The king takes the help of his companion, the Vidūṣaka Gautama, to bypass the harem opposition and wins the love of the maid. Finally the maid is discovered to be a princess in disguise and the love is consummated into a happy marriage. The dramatic story is, thus, of royal love, court atmosphere and harem intrigue. The emotions revealed in the course of its development, namely, spite, jealousy, rivalry, indignation, conciliation, deceit, ridicule etc. are the transitory states of love, quite natural and human. The story thus acquires domestic and family colours.

In constructing this love story Kālidāsa has chosen entertaining and appealing situations which he has woven skilfully in the plot. The quarrel of the dance masters in act i, the drama of serpent-bite in act iv resulting in the lovers' meeting in the Samudragṛha are situations which indicate Kālidāsa's dramatic powers. Besides these deliberately planned situations the scene in Pramadavana and that near the Samudragṛha which occur by coincidence, are full of dramatic

interest due to the queen's opposition and the delightful laughter they provide.

Kālidāsa seems to use contrast and change to make the situations interesting and thereby naturally avoids monotony. The scene of intense rivalry and dispute in the first act, made sharper by its biting humour, is followed immediately by the deep, reverbating sound of the musical drum which fills the atmosphere. Then the lovely Mālavikā comes on the stage ; her melodious singing and exquisite dance exhibition transport the reader into an enticing and engrossing world of art. The story moves to the *Aśoka-dohada* scene in Pramadavana, where we meet the love-lorn Mālavikā, the sympathetic Bakulāvalikā applying lac-dye to her feet, the private conversation between the two blooming with the emotion of love. The helplessness of Mālavikā, the encouragement and promise of help which Bakulāvalikā gives her, Agnimitra's impatience, Irāvatī's sudden appearance on the scene, the queens' inflamed anger throwing the king in a ridiculous situation on the one hand and the danger of a terrible opposition on the other hand : these are the swiftly changing emotional pictures that come in the wake of further development. The fourth act is again crammed with moving happenings : the serene Dhāriṇī recuperating after her accident, the fright of Gautama due to the serpent-bite and the agitation over medical care, the pretence leading to the secret rendezvous near the Samudragṛha, Irāvatī's maid spotting Gautama, the confusion caused by the frightened Gautam, the rising anger of Irāvatī checked temporarily by the child Vasulakṣmī's plight, which saves the king's exposure for the time being. If the first two acts present emotional pictures, acts iii and iv are tense with happenings that are coloured with human passions.

The play evinces the care Kālidāsa takes in connecting the dramatic happenings with causal motives. Gautama instigated the quarrel between the dance masters; the dance exhibition is its natural result. Dhāriṇī suffered a fall from the swing; and the work of fulfilling the *Aśoka-dohada* came to Mālavikā. Since Bakulāvalikā was asked to act as a messenger of love, the incident in the Pramadavana took place. The meeting near the Aśoka angered Irāvatī, and this led to the imprison-

ment of Mālavikā and Bakulāvalikā. To set them free Gautama concocted the ruse of serpent-bite; and this made the rendezvous in the Samudragṛha possible. The interlinking of the happenings by causal sequence is thus obvious.

The first two acts show the influence of Dhāriṇī's opposition and resentment. The *Aśoka-dohada* incident suggests that Dhāriṇī is mellowing; at the same time Kālidāsa introduces Irāvatī whose rising anger ends the third act in doubtful suspense and colours almost the whole of the fourth act; artistically, this is assuring dramatic suspense and audience eagerness for future development, the necessary elements of a successful drama construction.

The variety of happenings and incidents that has been carefully planned ensures variety of emotional response too. The dominating sentiment of the play is *śṛṅgāra* or love; other emotions come in the play as the transitory states of love. Besides, the *karuṇa* that hovers over the life of Mālavikā and Parivrājikā, *vīra* or the heroic that peeps through the suggestive descriptions of marauders's attack. military seige, battle and individual valour ; the sudden blossoming of the Aśoka and the thrilling incident in the Vindhya forest giving rise to the marvellous ; and the *hāsya* which tops like an arch over the whole play : the variety of emotional response enhances certainly the pleasure and appeal of the play as a theatrical piece.

Perhaps the greater stage value of the play lies in its humour. The Sanskrit drama poses the character of the Vidūṣaka for laughter ; the jester's superficial claim to being a Brahmin, his gluttony, cowardice, physical deformity and nonsensical talk usually create laughter on the stage. It is likely that these traits may not have become conventionalised and stale when Kālidāsa took up dramatic writing. But he has created in Gautama an individual character who holds his own place. Gautama is not merely a jester ; he is a companion of the king-hero, his 'minister of love affairs' ; in winning the heroine for the hero, in designing and executing various strategies, he has donned the Vidūṣaka's cap in stead of acting like a seasoned diplomat. Hence in the quarrel he fumigates between the dance masters, in his pretence of

serpent-bite and in the meeting he has arranged in the Samudragṛha for the lovers, there is mirth and delightful laughter that spring up. Gautama's tongue is as sharp as his intellect. He makes fun of all characters, including the king and the queens. His comparing Irāvatī with Mars or the frightening cat, the epithets of rams, elephants in rut, masters fed on unearned salaries, which he uses in instigating and provoking the dance masters, his comparison of Dhāriṇī to a stinging bee or a tawny-eyed lady, are witty thrusts which are humorous, at times ruthless ; but they bespeak subtle observation of human nature and an unfailing eye for fun-making too. The main butt of Gautama's ridicule is of course the king-hero. When Agnimitra has entrusted all the responsibility of winning Mālavikā to him, Gautama promptly likens him to a patient who expects the physician to examine him and bring also the medicine himself. Agnimitra wants Mālavikā but is afraid to defy his queen openly ; Gautama compares him to a vulture who hovers over the kitchen, but is afraid to enter. That an elderly king should pine for a young lovely girl, thinking himself youthful, is like a casket boasting of the jewelled ornaments it holds. These thrusts of Gautama are not merely humorous ; directed against the leader of the society, the king himself, they are an open commentary on the social conventions of the age. Gautama worked out strategy after strategy for winning Mālavikā for Agnimitra; when, in the final act, Dhāriṇī gives Mālavikā's hand to Agnimitra he stands mute ; Gautama has his last dig at the king : 'All new bridegrooms are shy' : The comment, as much on human nature, throws light on harem intrigue and the helpless position of women in a polygamous society too. Gautama's witty remarks provoke laughter ; but they are also wise observations on the contemporary social ethos.

The humour of situation is abundantly illustrated in the play. Besides the situations deliberately contrived by Gautama, the Pramadavana and Samudragṛha episodes are full of mirth, as Irāvatī's sudden appearance on the scene throws the king hero into tantrums. The contrast between the queen's real anger and the laughter that arises out of it is very enjoyable indeed. The unexpected humour provoked

by these situations is matched by verbal fun and intelligent wits ; and what is interesting is that Parivrājikā, Mālavikā and Bakulāvalikā too make intelligent witticisms, as if catching the air of Gautama's buffonery. The pleasant, mirthful atmosphere that pervades the play is undoubtedly delightful from the spectator's point of view.

However, with all the good points, one cannot forget that *Mālavikāgnimitra* is Kālidāsa's first attempt at playwriting and the play cannot stand the final test of art. One major factor in the shortcomings of the play is that the playwright has concentrated on external devices in the construction that are expected to be effective on the stage. A serious character in the play, Parivrājikā, says that 'Drama is essentially an article of the stage' ; and one of the dance masters Gaṇadāsa says, 'A play with varied sentiments, depicting the life of the people, is the only means of satisfying the diverse entertainment taste of the people at large'. These values are certainly true. But if dramatic writing were to regard stage-worthiness and potentiality to entertain and satisfy varied tastes as ultimate values, a play may turn out to be very popular and still lack the depth of literary presentation. Drama is not solely for entertainment ; it has the values of art ; and these values rest on its profound literary content and what it suggests to receptive minds. The Sanskrit theory describes drama as a *dṛśya-kāvya*, visual poetry. The visual aspect includes effective dramatic happenings, such elements of stage production as would please the eye and the senses, and factors of pure entertainment. These ought to be present in dramatic writing. But drama is also a *kāvya*. This literary aspect, which is *śravya* or to be heard, is equally important, perhaps more important than the visual aspect. Unless a dramatist is aware of the literary values of his writing, his playwriting cannot reach the level of real art.

By 'literary values' is not meant mere splendour of language or ornate prose. A writing does not attain literary excellence by sprinkling a few poetic fancies or by striving for diction loaded with ornaments of speech. *Mālavikāgnimitra* certainly has some delightful poetic ideas and the pleasant features of Vaidarbhī style, for which Kālidāsa is justly

famous. The poetic aspects of Kālidāsa's writing are certainly demonstrated in his etched pictures of Mālavikā's loveliness, in his knowledgeable estimate of her skill in dancing, in his gorgeous description of the Pramadavana at the height of its vernal beauty, and in his power to construct eloquent, effective dramatic dialogue. The poetic quality intended here is not merely the use of a beautiful style ; it is the essence of the entire writing. In the theme and plot-construction of the story, in revealing the inner character of men and women, in dialogue, a writer must keep an inward, emotion-tinged vision. In sketching the drama of human life, a writer must look at life through an emotional angle. Then the writing acquires a true poetic quality. With the inward vision a writer is able to perceive the real drama of life ; experience some profound or broad, subtle or hidden truths of life ; understand some meaning of life. In his *Vikramorvaśīya* and to a larger extent in *Śākuntala* the poet seems to have a vision of life, because he has turned inwards. In *Mālavikāgnimitra* there is enough craft, but no inner vision, no subtle art.

The delightful happenings or situations in this play will appear to the discerning and critical eye, if not on superficial observation, to be artful tricks, many of them built on contrived coincidence. As the dramatist is apparently striving for a successful stage play he seems to be enticed by literary and dramatic tricks in the construction of his plot, which, therefore, lacks the psychological causation which ought really to mould the sequence of happenings and the actions of the characters. The play entertains surely ; but it fails to grip the heart ; except providing some delightful entertainment, which is temporary and superficial, it does not give that aesthetic satisfaction which is the effect of art.

The strategies of Gautama play a major role in the development of the dramatic story. The quarrel between the two dance masters and the episode of serpent-bite are the two outstanding strategies employed by him. But they are concoctions only, and their success depends on the help given by many other characters. More than Gautama's provocation to the dance masters the quiet and dignified wisdom of the Parivrājikā has really succeeded in bringing Mālavikā out in

the open so that the king can feast his eyes on her beauty. In the happenings at the Samudragṛha the Pratihārī, the royal physician, the chamberlain and perhaps the king's minister must have fully co-operated with the Vidūṣaka to make his plan successful. Leave aside the characters that appear on the stage ; Dhāriṇī's little sister, the child Vasulakṣmi, does not appear on the scene ; but her contribution to the plot-development too is not negligible. She discloses to the king the name of Mālavikā, which fosters the king's fascination for the lovely maid ; and in the Samudragṛha episode it is her tiny accident that saves the king from a compromising situation and a terrible plight. A keen reader of the play is apt to feel that the entire harem is, willingly or without knowledge, ready to conspire against the two queens and assist the hero and the helpless heroine to attain their desire !

Along with the tricks of the craft Kālidāsa has been required to rely on some coincidences in building the plot of this play. One major reason that reconciles Dhāriṇī to the king's love affair is the fulfilment of the *dohada* of her favourite Aśoka. Even accepting the popular convention, that the tree should not blossom at first and then suddenly bloom into full splendour within five nights when Mālavikā touched it with her foot, is a marvellous coincidence. The strategy for the tryst in Samudragṛha is frustrated because Irāvatī's maid Candrikā sees Gautama on the varandah of the Samudragṛha ; that Gautama should doze at this time and babble in his sleep and reveal the information about the secret rendezvous, are very conveniently arranged for the intended development. And to save the confused hero and heroine from the resulting embarrassment and dilemma, as well as the arch-plotter the Vidūṣaka, a little girl and a monkey have to lend a helping hand. The artificial construction cannot escape the attention of a serious reader. It is true that coincidences and unexpected happenings do take place in life. A writer has often to resort to them, particularly a dramatist, in order to produce dramatic effect. But a true artist would try to provide a psychological basis for the apparently artificial happenings and coincidences that he has to use and minimize

thereby their contrived character. Such insight into artistic construction is seen in Kālidāsa's later writing. He sends his Kaṇva on a long pilgrimage at the beginning of his *Śākuntala* ; and with this master stroke of art makes the meeting of Śakuntalā and Duṣyanta natural and inevitable ; also Duṣyanta's prolonged stay in the Tāpovana to protect the daily sacrifices ; the smooth development of love culminating in love marriage ; and, at the same time, drops a significant hint of the untoward fate in store for Śakuntalā foreshadowing the future tragic development. Kālidāsa seems to have realised the great power of artistic suggestion. In this play, except for the mention of a ring inscribed with the effigy of a serpent, in the interlude of the first act, there is no attempt at preparing the background of coming incidents or providing psychological links of future developments. And so, despite the presentable attractiveness of the play, *Mālavikāgnimitra* remains a product of careful craft rather than of art.

Kālidāsa's skill in creating characters, to be observed in his *Śākuntala*, is seen to some extent in this play too. As Kālidāsa uses the principle of contrast, we are able to see the variety of human nature : The sedate but large-hearted Dhāriṇī, Irāvatī blooming with youth but fuming with jealousy ; the reticent Haradatta; but the emotional and easily provoked Gaṇadāsa ; Bakulāvalikā who is ready to help her friend with her heart and soul and who becomes sweeter the more she is crushed by difficulties and conflicts, and the contrasting Nipuṇikā who, though clever, is devoted to flattering her mistress. On the background of such contrasting pairs of characters Kālidāsa gives us the solemn, tragic figure of the Parivrājikā who has a high sense of duty, and that of Mālavikā, lovely but frail and helpless. Probably the most successful portrait in this play is that of Gautama, who grows beyond the conventional frame of the Vidūṣaka. Gautama holds the strings of the major happenings in the play ; he seems to be the real *sūtradharā*. But thereby Gautama has overshadowed the conventional hero of the play, Agnimitra. As a matter of fact, the drama is the story of Agnimitra's love ; one expects him to be at the centre of all happenings. What happens in the play, however, is that

Gautama dominates the action and we have a 'hero' who is unheroic. Agnimitra is required to beg abject pardon of the young queen and lie prostrate at her feet in the presence of other persons in the Pramadavana scene ; and in the Samudragṛha scene, caught red-handed in a love-tryst, he is once again in a compromising situation ; both turn the 'hero' into a figure of ridicule. According to the theory, the Vidūṣaka is a minor character. The dominating position given to him upsets the balance in characterization. It also creates a dilemma for the critics : Agnimitra, the conventional hero, fails to impress us as a hero ; and the Vidūṣaka, who cannot be the hero, usurps the position of a hero !

However, it will not be correct to assume that the shortcomings of *Mālavikāgnimitra* are due to a beginner's inexperience in the field of dramatic writing. Kālidāsa does show a promise of his high poetic and dramatic ability even in this first play. The comparative failure is to be traced to deeper causes. The subject of the play is social, concerning a royal family ; Kālidāsa has treated it in a lighter vein, in a playful manner. The contemporary social structure was male-dominated ; polygamy was accepted and respected in society. Still, behavioural patterns and common dealings were governed by decent principles and mutual respect and courtesy were expected from the male in his relations with the female. When a new love affair arose in the life of a man, therefore, he was confined on the one hand and, on the other hand, he had to face the anger of his wife. An open pursuit of the new love could be possible only by sacrificing courtesy completely ; a stealthy philandering always ran the risk of exposure and ridicule. Such was the social set-up; and the dilemma inherent in it must have been familiar to kings and the people of his royal court. Kālidāsa, with his fine sense of humour, must have been attracted to this social situation and its potentiality for comic laughter. Having chosen the angle of ridicule and laughter for the dramatic treatment, it was unavoidable for Kālidāsa to give prominence to the character of the Vidūṣaka. But the accepted social convention regarded the king as the undisputed leader of society and he came to be accepted also as the hero of dramatic com-

positions. Moreover, arts and literature were under the patronage of the ruling king. These social factors made a comic representation of the king-hero virtually impossible. An artist's dilemma was the desire to treat the whole dramatic story in a comic vein, and at the same time the social obligation to preserve the dignity of the king-hero and not permit him to be an object of ridicule and laughter. Instead of solving the dilemma Kālidāsa included both its horns in his dramatic treatment. Treating the Vidūṣaka as the key character he presented his story as a laughter-provoking comedy; and took literary care to portray the king-hero as a brave, politically adept and wise monarch. The result, of course, was disastrous: Agnimitra fails to impress us either as a hero of victorious battles or of a successful adventure of love.

In the later development of drama, the *prahasana* pattern provided an answer to the artistic dilemma posed above. But it did not win approval of the elite audience. The farcical comedy of manners did not find roots in society because it was not prepared to accept the king-hero in ridiculous, laughable position (except in *prahasana*). And so, the royal court comedy of love, without the ridicule of the hero, came to be acknowledged as the standard pattern of dramatic writing. Kālidāsa did not turn his story into a *prahasana* and tried to create a comedy of manners; but he did not show the boldness to treat the hero as a perfect comic figure. The shortcomings of *Mālavikāgnimitra* are rooted, in my opinion, in the failure to evolve a new pattern of drama, a real comedy of manners, on the lines of the comedies of Moliere, Bernard Shaw and Oscar Wilde.

It must be remembered that *Mālavikāgnimitra* appears to suffer in merit only when it is compared with the two mature plays of Kālidāsa. Otherwise, even this first play had a tremendous influence on Sanskrit drama, as Kālidāsa's imitations by Harṣa, Rājaśekhara and Bihlaṇa show. Kālidāsa's superiority as an artist is equally evidenced by his conscious efforts to improve on his earlier mistakes. *Mālavikāgnimitra* still holds a position of importance, therefore, in the history of Sanskrit drama.

6

MĀLAVIKĀGNIMITRA : TIME-ANALYSIS

In examining the time supposedly required for the incidents presented in this first play of Kālidāsa, Sanskrit scholars seem to have different opinions. Prof. Wilson assumes the total time to be about twelve hours[1]. Mr. Kale judges this time to be about three weeks[2]. Prof. Karmarkar thinks that the total time taken by all the incidents in the play is between two and three months.[3] Prof. S.M. Paranjape offers very illuminating comments on the references to time.[4] But I suspect that the vital distinction between the *actual* time that the incidents would really take and the time *assumed* by the dramatist for his dramatic purpose appear to have been confused in most of these calculations. I intend, therefore, to present my own analysis of the problem and the inferences drawn therefrom.

[1]

From the Parivrājikā's explanation of the mystery surrounding the identity of Mālavikā, in act V, it is clear that, according to the prophecy of a visiting saint, the Vidharbha Princess was to undergo a state of servitude for one year, at the end of which period she would be appropriately wed by a worthy king. This incident of marriage of Mālavikā with Agnimitra, the ruler of Vidiśā, is actually presented here in the final act. One must infer, therefore, that the dramatic incidents presented in the play take place towards the end of the year of prophecy when Mālavikā's stay *in cognito* is nearing its end.

Mālavikā was proceeding towards Vidiśā. On her way, her party was assaulted in the thick of the Vindhya forest by a band of runaway marauders. Mālavikā somehow escaped but fell into the hands of Virasena, the chief of the border-fortress in Agnimitra's Kingdom. Virasena sent Mālavikā as a present to the chief queen of Agnimitra, Dhāriṇī, who was also his sister. The Parivrājikā, who was the younger sister of Sumati, the Minister of the Vidarbha Prince, who was guarding the escape-party but who lost his life in fight, managed, too, to escape ; but finding that she had lost both her brother and Mālavikā, she turned a recluse, donned saffron garments and entered the palace of Agnimitra. She was delightedly surprised to find Mālavikā in the harem serving as a maid to queen Dhāriṇī. These events might have taken about two months. Later, the Parivrājikā decided to keep mum in view of the prophecy ; and things settled for a time, though ripe for new developments. Considering all these events, which are narrated in acts I and V, it is obvious that Mālavikā had been staying in the palace of Agnimitra for at least eight months when the play opens up. It is equally obvious that this long duration of nearly a year is not assumed for the dramatic events. On the contrary, the incidents in the play seem to take place, as suggested earlier, during the final days of Mālavikā's stay in the palace.

[2]

The third act refers to the *dohada* of the golden Aśoka which Mālavikā fulfilled. As a result the tree blossomed even before the period of five nights stipulated by Dhāriṇī was over. This fact, joyfully and unambiguously reported in the fourth act, clearly demonstrates that the events described in acts three to five take place *within a period of five nights.* Another obvious inference is that acts one and two are continuous inasmuch as, after the decision about the dance performance has been taken in act one, the demonstration follows immediately in act two, with only a brief interval for preliminary preparations, so that the events of the first two acts could be said to have taken place on the morning of the

same day and to have been over by 12 noon according to the unmistakable reference to time by the king's bard.[5] There are only two factors which have to be decided : one is that of the duration between the occasion when the king saw Mālavikā's picture in the queen's hall for the first time and the quarrel which the Vidūṣaka instigated between the dance masters ; the other is that of the interval between the dance performance and the event of the *Aśoka dohada*, that is to say, between acts two and three.

Apparently, these intervals could not have been very long. But the invasion of the Vidharbha by Agnimitra's forces presents a difficulty in accepting the inference. The first act reports Agnimitra commanding this invasion and the fifth act refers to its very successful conclusion. What is the time required for this military operation ?

On the face of it, if a reasonably short period of time were not to be postulated for the invasion, a number of puzzling issues would inevitably arise : How, for instance, could Agnimitra remain passive and indifferent to the drawn-out battle ? The attack on the Vidharbha Prince was, in a way, an operation to rescue the Vidharbha Princess, the fiancee of Agnimitra and the King was expected to make some kind of personal move at least in the interest of his betrothed. Hence, Prof. Karmarkar avers that this duration of the invasion has to be assumed as a short one, perhaps of a week. Agnimitra had appointed Vīrasena as Commander of the frontier-guard and the army under his command was kept in perfect readiness to attack the Vidharbha the moment the necessary orders were issued by Agnimitra. Yajñasena, the usurper of the Vidharbha kingdom had, therefore, no time to get the counter-attack ready and was defeated without much fighting. This is an additional assumption on the part of Prof. Karmarkar.[6] But it does not appear necessary to base the inference of a swift invasion on the double assumption of a possible defect in Agnimitra's characterization and that of an enemy off his guard. The contemporary wars did not necessarily take a long time as modern wars, for instance do. The Mahābhārata war, supposed to be a stupendous event, was over in just eighteen days. This particular war against the Vidharbha was

after all a swift attack only. Agnimitra's forces, moreover, were fully prepared for it. It was decided in advance that the attack was to go ahead if peaceful negotiations already set afoot were to fail.[7] The confidential orders in this regard must have gone to Vīrasena in good time. And since Vīrasena was in position on the frontier, not much time could have taken for marching Agnimitra's army into the Vidharbha territory. These considerations suggest that about a week's time was quite adequate for the conclusion of the invasion after the necessary command was given.

Agnimitra dismisses his Minister Vāhataka and then almost immediately the Vidūṣaka is seen approaching the king.[8] The king had seen Mālavikā in a picture and the Vidūṣaka was instructed to devise means by which the King would be able to see her in person. Gautama, the Vidūṣaka, has fulfilled his mission and has come to report about the same. It can be imagined that the clever and resourceful Gautama would not be wasting much time in setting the two dance masters against each other—which was the strategy he had devised for bringing Mālavikā out in the open. It could also be presumed that after having seen Mālavikā in the picture and being drawn towards her charms Agnimitra, too, would not endure much delay. Thus, between the first glimpse in the picture and the quarrel of dance masters the interval could not be of more than a day.

The duration of the Vidharbha invasion, as discussed above, suggests that the time lapse between act two and act three could be a very brief one. In the Interlude of act three a maid, Samāhitikā, reports that 'Mālavikā is losing colour like a discarded garland of *Mālati* flowers, these past days.[9]' The words '*eṣu divaseṣu*' create the impression that during the exhibition of dance Mālavikā fell in love with the King at first sight and, realising the hopelessness of her love, has been pining for a considerable time—in reality, even for a few months. But if the words were to be so interpreted, the suggested time interval would conflict with the duration of the invasion and also with certain other facts recorded in the play itself. In the same Interlude of the third act, the female keeper of the Pramadavana asks Samāhitikā about the final

result of the dance contest. **The performance presented by Ganadasa is shown in the second act**, that by Haradatta was to take place the next day. If, after this was over and the decision was announced, a few days had passed, the result of the contest would be known in the whole palace and it would not be necessary for the Uddyānapālikā to get the news from an interior maid. This suggests that the query is made on the same or the next day the result was announced. If so, the words '*eṣu divaṣesu*' must not be interpreted literally but only poetically. There is another significant fact in this Interlude. It is the non-blossoming of the Golden Aśoka which the Pramadavana-keeper has set out to report to Queen Dhāriṇī. The Queen's love and anxiety for the Aśoka is fully shown in the play. It is obvious that she would not have delayed the *dohada* at all; she would have fulfilled it herself had it not been for the accidental injury to her foot; but she commissioned Mālavikā for this work; the Main Scene shows Mālavikā in the Pramadavana fulfilling the *Aśoka dohada.* The sequence of these facts leads to the logical conclusion that Mālavikā came to the Pramadavana on the day next to the one on which the maids' conversation in the Interlude took place.

There is one more difficulty to be settled. The play refers to the advent of Spring. The third act describes the outstanding grandeur and beauty of the Vernal season conceived as a beautiful Lady.[10] It also describes the fulfilling of the *Aśoka dohada* in elaborate details. It can be imagined that the facts of the non-blossoming of the Aśoka could not have been reported at the commencement of the season. The keeper of the garden would normally wait for a few days; and then seeing that 'the appearance of the blossoms is delayed', would report the fact to the Queen. This suggests that the season must have advanced to some extent when the events of the third act are supposed to take place. This is indirectly supported by a reference in the fifth act to 'the youth of the season declining towards maturity.'[11] The dramatic events, therefore, have to be placed somewhere in the *middle of the Spring*.

Against this inference there is apparently the statement of

the Vidūṣaka in the third act referring to the season's first buds being sent by Queen Irāvatī as a gift of love to Agnimitra.[12] This is taken as a reference to the *commencement* of the season by most of the editors and commentators. But this meaning would undoubtedly conflict with the reference in the fifth act, to the season's youth fading into maturity : It would mean an interval of a month or two between act III and act V. But the dramatist expressly states that the events between acts III and V took place within a *pañcarātra* (five nights). A way to get over this conflict would be to treat either the King's or the Vidūṣaka's descriptive statement as being rather loose and not intended to be quite precise. But a more straightforward explanation is probably available : The buds of the red Aśoka (which Irāvatī sent to Agnimitra) are truly a symbol of the Spring. But is it necessary to assume that the buds make their appearance the moment the season sets in ? In fact, the description which Agnimitra gives of the red Aśoka, Kurabaka and Tilaka, in the same act, after the Vidūṣaka's statement under reference, does *not* suggest that the season started only the previous or the same day. On the contrary, the Pramadavana could be imagined to be in perfect bloom only when a few weeks, or at least a fortnight, had already passed after the commencement of the season. The phrase 'festivity of the new season' in the same reference must, likewise, be taken not to refer to 'the season which started yesterday' but rather 'recently,' 'currently'; '*nava*' does not always mean 'brand-new'; it also means 'recent,' 'fresh', that is to say, in the context, the season of the year. Besides, the pleasures of the season, like mounting a swing and sipping new wine, could really be enjoyed not on the very first day of the Spring but when the season has settled down a bit. This explanation, I hope, removes the apparent conflict between the words of the King and the Vidūṣaka and really harmonises with the inference drawn earlier that the dramatist conceives the period to be the middle of the Spring.

The *total time* of the dramatic events in the play would now appear to be as follows : An interval of a day between acts I and II; two or three days between acts II and III; and

the events of acts III to V within five nights : The total time thus comes to be about a week. It must be said, therefore, that **Kalidasa assumes the entire dramatic action of the play to have taken place in about a week, a week somewhere in the middle of the Spring**. This is dramatic time, *not the actual time* required by the incidents, which certainly, would spread over at least a few months.

[3]

The time of individual acts may now be determined.

The first two acts, as already noted, are continuous. When Gaṇadāsa's performance is over and the act closes it is mid-day. It should be reasonable to suppose that the performance required about an hour and the preliminary preparations[13] in the music hall took about the same time. Between the event the King saw Mālavikā in a picture and the quarrel of the dance masters which the Vidūṣaka engineered, I have presumed an interval of a day. The Interlude to act I shows Gaṇadāsa leaving for his home after finishing his professional duty for the session.[14] And since the main events of the first and the second acts take place on the morning of the same day, it is necessary to assume a gap of one day between the Interlude and the Main Scene of act I. Accordingly the time sequence would be as follows :

Act I : Interlude — The morning of a day.
Main Scene— Next day; between 9 a.m. and 10 a.m.

Act II : Main Scene—The same day, morning, after about an hour; between 11 a.m. and 12 noon.

[4]

The interval between act II and act III could not extend beyond two or three days as discussed earlier. The Interlude to act III must be placed in the morning : Parivrājikā intends to visit Queen Dhāriṇī and has asked the maid Samāhitikā to

get the *Bījapūraka* from the royal garden as a formal gift to be presented to the queen according to custom. In this same Interlude, the keeper of the garden notices that the Queen's favourite Aśoka is delayed in its vernal blossom and she must report the matter at once to the Queen. Since fresh flowers appear on the trees, generally, in the morning, it would not be incorrect to fix the time of this Interlude in the morning.

It is obvious that the Main Scene of the third act opens sometime in the noon.[15] But do the *morning* of the Interlude and the *noon* of the Main Scene belong to an identical day ? The Interlude shows the keeper of the garden going to Queen Dhāriṇī to report the delayed blossoms. Dhāriṇī sustained an injury to her foot some time after this news was received.[16] It is possible to imagine that the injury and the commission entrusted to Mālavikā for fulfilling the *Aśoka dohada* take place after the Interlude, say between 9 a.m. and 12 noon, since Dhāriṇī, loving the Aśoka as she did, would not brook any delay in getting the needful done. With this understanding it is possible to assume that the whole of the third act is to be placed in the morning and the noon of *the same day*. In the Main Scene Mālavikā refers to the Queen's stipulation of *Pañcarātra,* the period of *five nights* given for the blossoming of the Aśoka.[17] The day, therefore, is the first day *of the pañcarātra*. Hence the time of the third act can be calculated as follows :

Act III : Interlude—two days after the second act; morning, about 8 a.m.

Main Scene—the same day;
after-noon, between 2 p.m. and 4 p.m.

[The first day of the Pañcarātra]

[5]

The fourth act reports that Irāvatī paid a courtesy call to Dhāriṇī on the day *previous* to the day of the fourth act.[18] During this visit Irāvatī inquired after Dhāriṇī's well-being and also reported to her the unworthy overtures of the King

to Mālavikā in the royal garden. As a result of this report Dhāriṇī ordered Mālavikā and the maid Bakulāvalikā to be confined in the cellar of the Samudragṛha.

Since the third act closes some time towards the evening, it may be supposed that Irāvatī called on Dhāriṇi the next morning. Irāvatī could not have paid the visit the same evening or at night, as it would not have been quite correct to do so; and moreover she was a little drunk and had sufferred an unexpected humiliation. At the same time a longer interval will we unreasonable considering Irāvatī's temper. Hence the supposition that this visit *occurred next morning* of the day the action of the third act took place. And since this day of the visit is the *day preceding* the one on which the fourth act opens, it is fairly certain that the day of the fourth act is *the third day of the pañcarātra.* It has been assumed that the entire third act takes place on a single day. This means that the day of the fourth act is also the third day since Dhāriṇī injured her foot, and that there is a gap of one day between the third and the fourth acts. The fourth act shows that Mālavikā has been released from her forced prison. It is not possible to conceive that Mālavikā would be required to languish in a solitary cellar for longer than a couple of days and that, having learnt of her imprisonment, the King and the Vidūṣaka would permit days to pass without lifting a finger to free the poor girl. This fact, thus, accords perfectly with a day's interval calculated above.

The fourth act shows Dhāriṇī resting in an open place in the harem. The King describes the place as being under the Sun's rays.[19] It is presumable that it is noon. The events described here happen in swift succession. Towards the close of the act the little Vasulakṣmī is reported as playing with a ball when she was frightened by a 'brown monkey.'[20] This, in the context, indicates evening. This is supported by other references in this act. Nipuṇikā drops a crooked stick over Vidūṣaka who was dozing near the Samudragṛha. It look some time for him to realize that it was a stick and not a serpent.[21] Bakulāvalikā too, coming out of hiding, mistook the stick for a serpent.[22] This is the unmistakable result of

the fading daylight. The time of the fourth act may, therefore, be fairly calculated as follows :

Act IV : One day after the third act;
from 2 or 3 p.m. to 6-30 p.m.

[The third day of the Pañcarātra]

[6]

Towards the close of the fourth act, the Aśoka is reported to have blossomed miraculously. The fifth act, shows the reception that Dhāriṇī commanded in honour of this event which was eagerly but anxiously awaited. It is expected that Dhāriṇī, out of sheer joy and enthusiasm, would want the reception to take place as early as possible. But the preparations include the construction of an altar round the Aśoka;[23] and since the fourth act closed on an evening, a day's interval is clearly indicated.

The fifth act opens with an Interlude. The time is morning because Dhāriṇī is reported as sending through a servant usual gift of gold pieces to the royal priest.[24]

The Main Scene, too, must be placed in the morning. The King is in the Justice-hall. After he comes out, Dhāriṇī's request to attend the reception in honour of the Aśoka is communicated to him by the Pratīhārī.[25] The time when a King attends the Hall of Justice is invariably morning. Hence, this scene must be placed at about 9 or 9.30 a.m.

As the situation stands, the Interlude and the Main Scene could have been placed one after the other on the same morning : the Interlude at 8 a.m. and the Main Scene from 9 or 9 30 a.m. onwards. A conflicting factor, however, is presented by the news of the Vidharbha invasion, the concluding events of which are reported here. Vīrasena has won this battle and has dispatched the gifts consisting of cart-loads of jewels and of two young girls who are supposed to be accomplished in music. This dispatch has already arrived in Vidiśā : but since the two girls were tired during the journey they were to rest for a while and were presented to the King the *next day*.[26] This presentation is shown in the fifth act. This

necessitates an interval of a day between the Interlude and the Main Scene. The time of the fifth act, therefore, must be understood as follows :

Act V : Interlude —The next day of the fourth act;
About 8.00 a.m.

[The fourth day of the Pañcarātra]

Main Scene —The next day after the Interlude;
From 9 or 9.30 a.m. onwards, for about an hour.

[The fifth day of the Pañcarātra]

References

1. *Select Specimens of the Theatre of the Hindus*, Vol. II (London, 1871); p. 345.
2. *Mālavikāgnimitra*, ed. by M.R. Kale, (Bombay, 1933); Introduction, p. xi.
3. *Mālavikāgnimitra*, ed. by R.D. Karmarkar. (Poona, 1950); Introduction, pp. xii.
4. *Mālavikāgnimitra*. ed. by S.M. Paranjape, (Poona, 1981); Introduction, p. 17; Notes on III-3; IV-14; V-12.
5. cf. : Act ii, verse 12.
6. cf. : Karmarkar, *op. cit* Introduction, p. xxii.
7. cf. Agnimitra's statement : 'वाहतक, प्रकृत्यमित्रः प्रतिकूलचारी च मे वैदर्भः। तद् यानव्यपक्षे स्थितस्य पूर्वसंकल्पितसमुन्मूलनाय वीरसेनप्रमुखं दण्डचक्रं आज्ञापय।' Act I.7 1–3
8. cf. राजा – (विदूषकं दृष्ट्वा) अयं अपरः कार्यान्तरसचिवः अस्मान् उपस्थितः। Māl., Act I. 8. 10.
9. cf. 'मालविका अपि <u>एषु दिवसेषु</u> अनुभूतमुक्तेव मालातीमाला म्लायमाना लक्ष्यते।' Act III.
10. cf. III. 5.
11. cf. V. 4; 'परिणामाभिमुखं ऋतोः उत्सुकयति यौवनं चेतः।'
12. cf. ननु भवानद्य प्रथमं वसन्तावतारसूचकानि रक्ताशोककोरकाणि उपायनं प्रेष्य नववसन्तोत्सवापदेशेन इरावत्या निपुणिकामुखेन प्रार्थितः...' Act III, 2. 8–10

13. cf. The Vidūṣka's instruction : 'तेन हि द्वौ अपि वर्गौ प्रेक्षागृहे सङ्गीतरचनां कृत्वा अत्रभवतो दूतं प्रेषयतम् । अथवा मृदङ्गशब्द एव न उत्थापयिष्यति ।' Act. I.
14. cf. Bakulāvalikā's statement : एष नाट्याचार्यः आर्यगणदासः सङ्गीतशालातः इदानीं निष्क्रामति ।' And Gaṇadasa's : इदानीमेव पञ्चाङ्गाभिनयं उपदिश्य मया...।' Also, 'अहमपि लब्धक्षणः स्वगृहं गच्छामि ।' Mixed Interlude, Act I.
15. cf. The King's statement : 'अथ इम दिवसशेषं उचितव्यापारविमुखेन चेतसा क्व नु खलु यापयामि' । Act III. Later, Irāvatī is shown visiting the Pramadavana for *dolādhirohaṇa* : for this the afternoon time would seem to be appropriate.
16 It is reported that Dhāriṇī received an injury to her foot due to some prank on the part of the Vidūṣaka : cf. Mālavikā's statement : सन्दिष्टास्मि देव्या यथा 'मालविके गौतमचापलात् दोलापरिभ्रष्टायाः सरुजौ मम चरणौ ।' Since the Vidūṣaka could not have anticipated the delayed blossom it is reasonable to suppose that he conceived the idea of causing a minor accident to Dhāriṇī, *after* the report of the keeper of the garden was received, hoping naturally that the work of *dohada-pūraṇa* would be entrusted to Mālavikā and the King then could have an opportunity of seeing Mālavikā personally in the royal garden.
17. cf. Mālavikā's statement : 'यदि स पञ्चरात्राभ्यन्तरे कुसुमं दर्शयिष्यति ततः अहं तव ...... अभिलाषपूरयितृकं प्रसादं दास्यामि' इति । Act III.
18 cf. The Vidūṣaka's statement : 'परिव्राजिका मे कथयति । ह्यः किल तत्रभवतो इरावती रुजाविहस्तचरणां देवीं सुखपृच्छिका आगता ।' Act IV.
19. cf. 'देवि, आतपाक्रान्तोऽयमुद्देशः । शीतक्रिया चास्य प्रशस्ता । तदन्यत्र नीयतां शयनम् ।' Act IV.
20. Jayasenā's report to the King : 'देव, कुमारी वसुलक्ष्मीः कन्दुकमनुधावन्ती पिङ्गलवानरेण बलवत् उत्त्रासिता' । Act IV.

21 cf The Vidūṣaka's utterances : 'भो दर्वीकरो मे उपरि पतित: ।'; '(सप्रहासम्) कथं दण्डकाष्टमेतत् ।' Act IV.

22. cf '(प्रविश्य पटीक्षेपेण) बकुलावलिका--मा तावत् भर्ता प्रविशतु । इह कुटिलगति: सर्प इव दृश्यते ।' Act IV.

23. cf The Uddyānapālikā's opening statement : 'उपक्षिप्तो मया कृतसत्कारविधे: तपनीयाशोकस्य वेदिकाबन्ध: । यावद् अनुष्ठितनियोगं आत्मानं देव्यै निवेदयामि ।' Act V.

24. cf Sārasaka's words : 'मधुकरिके, वेदपारगाणां ब्राह्मणानां नित्यदक्षिणा दातव्या । तदार्यपुरोहितस्य हस्तं प्रापयिष्यामि ।' Act V.

25. cf. Pratihārī's statement : 'आज्ञप्तास्मि देव्या अशोकसत्कार-व्यापृतया—विज्ञापय आर्यपुत्रम् ।...तद् यावद् धर्मासनगतं देवं प्रतिपालयामि ।' Act V.

26. cf. Sārasaka's report: वशीकृत: किल वीरसेनप्रमुखै: भर्तुर्विजय-दण्डैर्विदर्भनाथ: ।...तेन महासाराणि रत्नवाहनानि शिल्प-कारिकाभूयिष्ठं परिजनं च उपायनीकृत्य भर्तु:सकाशं प्रषितो दूत: श्व: किल भर्तारं द्रक्ष्यति ।' And Kañcukī's report of the minister's message : 'तस्मिन् विदर्भराजोपायने द्वे शिल्पदारिके मार्गपरिश्रमाद् अलसशरीरे इति न पूर्वं प्रवेशिते । संप्रति देवोपस्थानयोग्ये ।'...Act V.

7

THE UNUSUAL CHARACTER OF ACT IV IN THE VIKRAMORVAŚĪYA

The construction of the fourth act in Kālidāsa's *Vikramorvaśīya* (*Vik*) is unusual. It contains a number of Prakrit and Apabhraṁśa verses, many of which are not spoken by Purūravas who is the main speaking character in this act. This unusual construction has led many scholars to believe that these verses are spurious or interpolated, that is, they are not written by Kālidāsa and someone else may have introduced them in the act. These scholars hold this opinion because (*i*) Purūravas is an *uttama pātra* and, according to the rules of Sanskrit Dramaturgy, must speak in Sanskrit only; further, (*ii*) many verses in this group are not spoken by Purūravas at all and (*iii*) these verses break the continuity of dramatic action. It was S.P. Pandit, the editor of the first critical edition of *Vik*., who led this view in the introduction to this edition.

As opposed to this views is the opinion of scholars like Bollenson and Pischel who believe that all these verses are genuine and are written by Kālidāsa himself. In the light of this opinion, the objections could be answered by saying that, (*i*) the *Nāṭyaśāstra* of Bharata allows change of language under special circumstances. When we remember that Purūravas has lost his sanity, it will not seem unusual for him to use Apabhraṁśa language. (*ii*) The verses which are not spoken by Purūravas represent songs which are sung from behind the curtain. Understood thus the verses may not appear to be so unusual. (*iii*) The fact that these verses are mostly songs, which must have been accompanied by

instrumental music, will explain the point of break in the dramatic action. A song introduced in the midst of a dramatic dialogue does appear to break the continuity of action. But from the point of view of dramatic effect and the entertainment it affords, the audience would hardly mind such breaks or interruptions.

It is possible to accept the second view. The only question that must be answered is with reference to the purpose behind this unusual construction. It is also possible to assume that Kālidāsa had a definite purpose in his mind when he came to construct this act.

Let us not forget that the only speaking character in this very long scene is Purūravas. A lengthy dramatic monologue lasting for half an hour or more may be exhausting to the actor playing the role of Purūravas; and at the same time the spectators may also be tired with the monotonous scene. It is possible, therefore, that Kālidāsa may have thought about this dramatic problem from a practical point of view and introduced the songs in order to provide relief to the actor on the one hand, and a diversion and an entertainment to the spectators on the other hand.

One could imagine another special purpose for the peculiar construction of the fourth act. We see that Āyus (the son of Purūravas and Urvaśī) is coronated actually on the stage. This scene of coronation (*Yauvarājyābhiṣeka*) is taken by some scholars to represent the coronation of one of the Gupta princes with whose reign Kālidāsa is traditionally associated. This may or may not be true. But it is equally possible to imagine that this play may have been presented at some special occasion, where a number of royal guests were invited. An occasion of such a special nature demands a special show of a spectacular type. It is likely that Kālidāsa may have constructed this act with an element of song and dance in order to provide this spectacular entertainment.

Apart from the consideration of the practical purpose of an actor's convenience, or the special purpose of providing entertainment for a royal audience, it appears to me that the peculiar construction of the fourth act can be explained and justified on a totally different ground, namely, that of artistic

necessity. On examining the verses in this act, we find that there are about 32 verses, 12 of which are put in the mouth of Purūravas and 20 are spoken from behind the curtain. Eleven verses of Purūravas are in the Apabhraṁśa language, and one in Sanskrit ; the rest of the 20 verses are in Mahārāṣṭrī Prakrit. The verses which Purūravas uses may be called *Pratyukti* stanzas as they contain his questions about Urvaśī and the replies that are supposed to be received by him. The other 20 verses may be called *Anyokti* stanzas, as they are spoken by others, and they contain a general description of some objects in Nature, which has a close parallel to the mood and condition of Purūravas. It is clear that these stanzas fill up the necessary gap between the passage of Purūravas from one object to the other or from one place to another. They have thus a definite part to play in the construction of the act ; and it is not correct to say that they are spurious or repetitive.

Besides, the several technical terms that Kālidāsa uses in this act clearly indicate that the entire scene is planned to the accompaniment of music and dance. Let us review these technical terms :

Carcarī or *Carcarikā* which is very often used in this act, means a dance which accompanied a particular movement.

Duipadi or *Duipadikā* probably indicates a pose which may have a close connection with dance, as it also indicates a song of four quarters sung in a particular rhythm, according to Bharata.

Kuṭilaka probably means a dance-like movement with zigzag steps.

Mallaghaṭī is probably a dance performed with earthen pitchers or jars (as in a Gujarātī or Rājasthānī Garbā).

Dvilaya clearly indicates that the particular dance with which it is associated was presented, first in *Vilambita laya* (slow tempo), and, then, in *Druta laya* (fast tempo).

The meaning of *Kakubha* and *Upabhaṅga*, which are mentioned together, can be explained by understanding that *Upabhaṅga* stands for a song of six lines which is sung in breaks; and *Kakubha* means a dance movement performed by moving towards each of the quarters (*Kakubha* means *Diśā*, direction).

Finally, *Khaṇḍaka*, *Khaṇḍadhārā*, *Khaṇḍikā*, *Khuraka*, *Galitaka*, *Jaṁbhalikā* and *Bhinnaka* which occur in this act stand for the names of various Metres in which the songs are composed.

All this examination shows that Kālidāsa wrote this scene not only as a dramatic monologue but also as a song and dance spectacle. The artistic reason is that what the scene presents is a lonely search of Purūravas for Urvaśī and a lonely sorrow, namely the lament of Purūravas for his lost wife. This is a good theme for a *lyric*. But it is not suitable for dramatic representation. That is why, like a true artist, and with a keen perception of dramatic values, Kālidāsa must have conceived this scene as an opera and as a *ballet*. One must, therefore, understand that the different objects, animals and birds that are introduced, are not left for imagination ; nor are they a part of stage props and drapery. They are to be represented by a dancer or a group of dancers, who with appropriate dance poses, gestures and movements would represent the particular object, animal or bird; and the movements of Purūravas towards these objects are similarly to be rendered by the dance technique; it is significant that there is actually a stage direction, at places, indicating that Purūravas executes a dance movement. The scene of search for Urvaśī is thus played by a band of dancers, the actor playing the role of Purūravas doing his own part, using the same technique. Dance requires the accompaniment of music and song. This is to be provided by the Prakrit and Apabhraṁśa verses which will be vocally sung from behind the curtain and also rendered by the musical instruments. These verses, as we have seen, describe the mood and condition of Purūravas or a particular object approached; they are thus a part of the scene of search, being its thematic accompaniment. In this way, the whole act is given the appearance of a dance *ballet*.

This, I think, is the only way the theme could be presented on the stage without detriment to dramatic values. This purpose of art, a dramatic necessity, could be sufficient in itself to explain the peculiar construction of the fourth act of the *Vikramorvaśīya*.

8

THE CURSE OF DURVĀSAS

The curse of Durvāsas occurs in the Interlude of act IV in the *Śākuntala*. Duṣyanta and Śakuntalā consummate their love by Gāndharva marriage. Duṣyanta has returned to his Capital promising Śakuntalā to send an escort for her to take her to the palace within three days or a week.[1] The fourth act opens on this background. Śakuntalā is seated near the hermitage entrance, completely lost in her own thoughts. Anasūyā and Priyaṁvadā, her companions, are out somewhere gathering flowers for worshipping Śakuntalā's deity of Good Fortune (*Saubhāgya-devatā*). They are a little worried too, because Śakuntalā had entered into marital relations with the king without obtaining prior permission of Tāta Kāśyapa and the elders in the *Tapovana*; they are equally anxious about whether Duṣyanta will remember Śakuntalā once he is surrounded by his harem women. It is at such a crucial moment that an uncalled-for *Atithi* announces his arrival in the *āśrama*. Kaṇva, before going on his pilgrimage, had entrusted the responsibility of receiving guests to Śakuntalā; and she is near the hermitage. Her companions, already busy with ritual work and remembering that Śakuntalā was there to look after the guest, ignore the Atithi's call quite naturally. Śakuntalā too is not the type of a girl who would *ordinarily* forget or neglect her duty. But the circumstances are different here. Śakuntalā is so engrossed in her thinking that she is not aware of her own self, much less could she notice the arrival and hear the announcement of an unexpected stranger.[2] And the guest also is a sage noted for his irrascible temper, intolerant nature and prone to easy provocation resulting in unjustifiable, undeserv-

ing punishments.[3] There is no wonder, therefore, that, enraged by the apparent neglect and disregard, Durvāsas bursts out immediately into a terrible curse :

> *Vicintayantī yam ananyamānasā*
> *Tapodhanam vetsi na sa mām upasthitam /*
> *Smariṣyati twām na sa bodhito-pi san*
> *Kathām pramattaḥ pratham kṛtām iva //*[4]

What is Kālidāsa's intention in using this curse? What dramatic purpose does it really serve?

It is well-known that the curse is an innovation of Kālidāsa. It is not there in the original Mahābhārata story, which ends with the encounter of Duṣyanta and Śakuntalā in the king's court. The story of the play, on the other hand, extends to two more acts and culminates on a different note. Rejected by Duṣyanta Śakuntalā proceeds unwillingly and helplessly to follow the king's Purohita to stay in his house till her delivery as suggested by him. Suddenly a light in female form descends from the heavens, lifts Śakuntalā and disappears in the aerial regions, leaving everybody mystified. Later, in the sixth act, the ring lost by Śakuntalā comes to the hand of Duṣyanta; he recovers his lost memory and is then consumed by remorse and unbearable agony. The dramatic story stumbles forward on doubt and vague hope of the two lovers' reunion. This development of the dramatic story is rooted in the incident of the curse. As Duṣyanta repudiated Śakuntalā a further development of the story was certainly called for. Had she been accepted as wife of Duṣyanta the play would have ended with the fifth act. Duṣyanta refused to accept Śakuntalā because he could not *remember* having any connection with this hermit girl; and neither Śakuntalā nor the *Tapovana* people could bring any conviction to him by evidence or argument. The loss of memory is a direct result of the curse. The central importance of the curse and the turn it gives to the story are, thus, quite obvious.

When Duṣyanta of the Mahābhārata refuses to accept Śakuntalā his stand is intentional; his behaviour appears to be arrogant and hypocritical. He had married Śakuntalā in private; he is not sure whether his subjects would approve of

the secret marriage; till then he pretends to have no connection with this girl and mouths blatant lies. He changes his stand, gives a full confession only when an Angel's voice announces the truth. The incident Kālidāsa describes in totally different. Duṣyanta's entire mentality is that of an upright Aryan, as Kālidāsa shows from the first meeting of the lovers in the opening act of the play. One feels therefore that Duṣyanta would never have rejected Śakuntalā had his mind not been affected by the incidence of the curse. In fact, it is not Duṣyanta but the curse of Durvāsas that is responsible for the estrangement of the loving couple. The Mahābhārata story does not create this impression because Duṣyanta of the epic is patently hypocritical. Kālidāsa obviously wanted for his art the incident to be impeccable; the rejection of Śakuntalā was necessary for his dramatic design; at the same time, he wanted the behaviour of his Duṣyanta to be above any blame and consistent with his noble and upright character and fully justified by other causes. The curse makes the rejection logical and inevitable, as far as Duṣyanta is concerned.

The curse and the resultant memory loss also make the scene of repudiation in the fifth act full of dramatic tension and emotionally poignant. The song of Haṁsapadikā at the opening of the fifth act carries the suggestion that Duṣyanta's memory is affected; he does not remember to be 'separated from a beloved person'.[5] Yet when he learns of the arrival of Kaṇva's pupils Duṣyanta promptly instructs his Purohita to receive the *āśrama* party with due ritual and ceremony and prepares himself to meet them. Duṣyanta wonders why the *Tapovana* people have come to him.[6] In the picture of Duṣyanta's mind torn by doubts and conjectures Kālidāsa has once again indicated the influence of the curse. The reader/spectator too is tense with curiosity, hope and doubt, and is dragged forward in the stream of the story.

The message of Kaṇva is conveyed. The request to receive Śakuntalā properly is made. The incidents of love and marriage are narrated and the case of Śakuntalā is put forward with all possible facts. In the present set-up it is not surprising that Duṣyanta is led to consider the entire plea as a hoax, a clever plot to entice and entangle him in the fortunes of a

hermit girl; and it is equally plausible that the *Tapovana* people should consider Duṣyanta a rogue, adept in diplomatic deceipt and falsehood. The reader/spectator, however, is fully aware that Śakuntalā is speaking nothing but truth; and Duṣyanta too is speaking truth from his own viewpoint because his loss of memory is not a pretense but a genuine, honest fact. Duṣyanta rejects Śakuntalā on purely *moral* grounds; between accepting someone else's wife as one's own and rejecting one's wife, the second is a lesser evil, morally less blameworthy. Under the circumstances, therefore, it would be unjust to blame Duṣyanta for repudiating Śakuntalā. It would also amount to ignoring Kālidāsa's dramatic design and intent, or a failure to understand the poet's art.

Kālidāsa changes the characterization of Duṣyanta. But he also turns the encounter between Duṣyanta and Śakuntalā into a terrible conflict of 'two truths'. It is a tense and moving drama, where passions are inflamed, tempers rise, accusations are hurled, unsavoury words are exchanged and emotions collide and break into tears. And in all this high drama there is an undercurrent of deep pathos and fateful tragedy. Poetry and drama vie with each other to reach the peak. This intensely moving scene, with its profound emotional impact, has been possible, let us remember, due to fact that the Duṣyanta has lost his memory. In the long analysis, therefore, the significance of the curse appears to be unmistakable.

Most of the modern critics of *Śākuntala* have ignored the poet's characterization of Duṣyanta. They have regarded Duṣyanta, like the general run of king-heroes of the Sanskrit drama, to be a pleasure-seeker, ready to tell defensive lies in embarrassing or compromising situations. But Kālidāsa has painted a different portrait. Duṣyanta is very sensitive to beauty in nature and in human life. It is not surprising that he is charmed by the tranquil beauty of the *Tapovana* and that he is attracted towards Śakuntalā. But if his intention were only to seduce this woodland beauty and have his pleasure, there is no reason why he should have debated in his mind whether he could take Śakuntalā as his lawful wife and felt satisfied, after learning the story of her life, that there was no

bar of religious law to his marrying her. The trouble he takes to convince the fool Vidūṣaka that his attraction for the *Tāpasa-kanyā* was not a momentary fancy, a desire to taste variety, but a deep abiding emotion of love, is another proof of his sincerity. In his private meeting with Śakuntalā, in the third act, he is overcome for a moment by the usual male eagerness and rashness; but his words are an unmistakable promise to Śakuntalā that he wants her as his wife and chief queen.[8] It is not correct, therefore, to assume that a psychological change came over Duṣyanta only after the recovery of the ring, in the sixth act, as many critics do. Duṣyanta's apparent neglect of Haṁsapadikā and his spending his time in the company of elder Vasumatī suggests that pleasures of the flesh did not hold any interests for him now.[9] And in his lament and self-reproach, shown in the sixth act, there is not even a remote suggestion of the pleasure he has lost; on the contrary Duṣyanta is torn by remorse, anger and agony for having abandoned his lawfully wedded wife, possibly a mother of his future son, and is wondering ceaselessly how he could have so blundered. Unable to account for his failure to recognise Śakuntalā when she was standing before him Duṣyanta regards his mental condition at that time as a temporary mental aberration, a veil that clouded his mind or an illusion or infatuation that overwhelmed his thinking processes. While an elephant is standing before us we may fail to recognise it; but as it moves away the footmarks left on the soil may bring conviction to us about the identity of the animal. Something like this seems to have happened, thinks Duṣyanta.[10] All this data from the play shows that, had the events taken their normal course, Duṣyanta would not have repudiated Śakuntalā. And the simile used in the actual words of the curse[11] lends support to the fact that what happened was a temporary aberration : Duṣyanta is not a *pramatta*, a monarch drunk with pride and power ; or metaphorically, intoxicated with heady liquor. Thus, Duṣyanta's rejection of Śakuntalā is the result of an *extraneous cause*, the incidence of the curse; it simply cannot be attributed to any defect or evil trait in Duṣyanta's character.

The curse, in fact, is due to Śakuntalā's inattention to the

arrival of Durvāsas. Duṣyanta is involved in it because he is married to Śakuntalā and she was thinking of him at that time. Many modern critics consider this as a breach of duty on the part of Śakuntalā and the curse as a punishment for her failure. I consider such an interpretation to be totally wrong in view of Kālidāsa's art design. It is a later Vedāntic idea which cannot be foisted on Kālidāsa's times, much less on his art presentation. The poet creates special circumstances in which Śakuntalā was confronted with the arrival of Durvāsas : Duṣyanta had left the same morning. What can a newly married girl be expected to do when her husband had taken her leave only a few hours before but get lost in thinking about him ? Durvāsas had arrived in the *Tapovana* unexpectedly, without notice or invitation. The personality of the sage too is ruthless and intolerant ; he is moreover arrogant and full of self-importance.[12] It cannot be expected from Durvāsas to appreciate the circumstances in which the poor girl was placed. He would delight only in showing his extra-ordinary powers even if they were to blast an innocent life.[13] The curse is clearly unjust and disproportionate to the so-called mistake committed *inadvertantly* by Śakuntalā.

Let us remember that curse is a very favourite motive with Kālidāsa, The Yakṣa in the *Meghadūta* was cursed by Kubera because he failed once to bring the flowers of worship to Kubera, unable to leave his wife in the early hours of the morning.[14] The Celestial Cow cursed king Dilīpa because he forgot to bow down to her on his visit to the heavens.[15] Indumatī was cursed because she tried to seduce a sage at the behest of Indra in her former existence as a nymph.[16] Daśaratha became a victim of a curse for an error of judgement inadvertantly committed. Urvaśī was cursed by Bharatamuni for her blunder in delivering the dramatic dialogue, though the blunder was natural and psychologically understandable. Jealousy and anger led her to fall under the curse of Kārtikeya. In all these cases where the poet has used the motive of curse one can see that the error on the part of the victim is not deliberate or so grave as to deserve such terrible punishment ; the person giving the curse is self-opinionated, intolerant or prone to assert his superior power, except in

the case of Daśaratha where the words of the curse are wrung out of unbearable sorrow. In the case of Indumatī the fault, if any, belongs to her former birth. It is not difficult to see, therefore, that Kālidāsa uses curse only as a poetic or dramatic *device* to build and develop his story, without any ulterior implications. And so, it would be artistically wrong to understand the curse of Durvāsas as a punishment imposed on Śakuntalā. Had it been so, Kaṇva would never have forgiven Śakuntalā. Kālidāsa implies that Kaṇva had special powers to know the past and the future; but after returning from the pilgrimage he does not speak about the visit of Durvāsas; he orders preparations for Śakuntalā's departure to her husband's house. This means that Kaṇva had a different understanding about the visit of Durvāsas and the curse the sage gave. Kaṇva has also a firm conviction about Śakuntalā's integrity and her sense of responsibility. He describes her as 'virtue incarnate.[17]

What does the curse then stand for ? In the dramatic story as conceived and developed by Kālidāsa the curse is certainly an unexpected, accidental occurrence. But even as a dramatic device to bring about certain developments the significance of the curse is worth a further probe. The accidental arrival of Durvāsas on the very morning that Duṣyanta left the *Tapovana*, the self-absorption of Śakuntalā, her companions being away from her and engaged in other activity at this nick of the moment, leaving Śakuntalā all alone to fend for herself, are a series of accidental factors; but they conceal and imply a deeper purpose. Obviously, it was a very untoward and inauspicious moment for Śakuntalā; it was fateful !

At the very opening of the play Kālidāsa has dropped a significant hint that Śakuntalā will have to face 'adverse destiny' (*pratikūla daiva*) The pilgrimage to Somatīrtha that Kaṇva had undertaken was to appease the unfavourable fate to some extent. According to Hindu religious philosophy the influence of fate has a reference to a persons's *karma* in the *previous life*. That is why, Kālidāsa does not show his Kaṇva doing anything about the visit of Durvāsas and his curse, although he had the powers to foresee the incident and

to counteract it even. That would have amounted to interfering with the destiny of a person, which cannot be done according to our philosophy. What is possible is modifying or lessening the harmful effects of fate ; and Kaṇva acts accordingly. Thus, the incidence of the curse is linked with the *pratikūla daiva* of Śakuntalā.

Kālidāsa's treatment of the incident confirms this impression. It would have been quite thrilling if Durvāsas were to appear on the stage and pronounce his dreadful curse. The emotional impact would have been terrific ; it would have undoubtedly evoked 'pity and terror' and produced a taste of terrible tragedy. Kālidāsa has sufficient dramatic sense to visualise the potentialities of this situation. And yet, this supreme poet shows the entire happening as taking place 'behind the curtain'. Why ? The considerations of dramatic taboos or economy of characters are simply inapplicable here. This means that Kālidāsa intends the curse to be presented as *a symbol of destiny* : Destiny or fate cannot be convincingly presented on the stage concretely, as a living character. Fate is unseen, invisible ; one can see only its results or consequences ; discern the invisible hand of destiny in the happenings that take place before us. This is the artistic reason why Kālidāsa places the scene 'behind the curtain'. But he gives us the dramatic opportunity of 'hearing' the destiny through the voice of Durvāsas. The hand of destiny strikes from the back : fate strikes unexpectedly and in the dark : Kālidāsa seems to give an artistic shape to the mysterious working of human destiny !

In corroboration of this interpretation consider some other facts presented by the poet. The curse in itself would not have resulted in the repudiation of Śakuntalā lose the ring ? Why could not the Vidūṣaka be present when the *āśrama* party came to meet Duṣyanta ? These are not factors that can be explained on the supposed hypothesis of error and inevitable punishment ! It is through these dramatic facts that Kālidāsa shows the working of adverse fate that looms over the life of Śakuntalā and dogs her love life.

Kālidāsa, thus, uses the curse as a dramatic device, as a potent cause for the loss of Duṣyanta's memory and as a

symbol of Śakuntalā's *pratikūla daiva*. Kālidāsa uses the curse because he and his contemporary audience believed in curse and its fateful effects, as Shakespeare used ghosts, witches, fairies and angels. Had Kālidāsa written his dramas in modern times he might have attributed his hero's loss of memory to a modern cause, like a shell-shock received on a battle front. James Hilton's novel (also turned into a film) *Random Harvest* presents a story which is remarkably similar to the story of *Śākuntala*. The hero receives a brain injury while fighting on the war front. After discharge he marries a beautiful girl. But the injury has wiped out his memory ; he does not remember his name and his true identity. Then he meets with another accident ; that revives his memory and he returns to his original aristocratic home, having completely forgotten the girl whom he has married and with whom he had lived for some time. The rest of the story is how this second memory comes back and how the girl succeeds in winning her love. The loss of memory is thus a medical fact, called *amnesia* in medical terms. Kālidāsa used only the device of a curse to bring it into play, consistent with the beliefs of his times. And he pours into it the power of destiny which makes a plaything of human life.

References

1. Cf. Priyaṁvadā's statement: अस्ति तेन राजर्षिणा संप्रस्थितेन स्वनामधेयाङ्कितम् अङ्गुलीयकं स्मरणीयमिति स्वयं पिनद्धम् । Act IV, Interlude. Later, Act VI-12, Duṣyanta tells the Vidūṣaka: ·· इमां मुद्रां तदङ्गुलौ निवेशयता मया प्रत्यभिहिता—एकैकमत्र दिवसे दिवसे मदीयं । नामाक्षरं गणय, गच्छसि यावदन्तम् ।। तावत् प्रिये मदवरोधगृहप्रवेशं । नेता जनस्तव समीपमुपैष्यनीति ।। If the name inscribed on the ring were 'Duṣyanta' the stipulated period would be *three* days; if it were 'Duṣyanta Mahārāja', it would be *seven* days.
2. Cf. Priyaṁvadā's observation: अनसूये पश्य तावत् । वामहस्तोपहितवदना आलिखितेव प्रियसखी । भर्तृगतया चिन्तया आत्मानमपि न एषा विभावयति, किं पुनः आगन्तुकम् ।

3. Anasūyā observes: एष दुर्वासाः सुलभकोपो महर्षिः । तथा शप्त्वा चटुल-उत्फुल्ल-दुर्वारया गत्या प्रतिनिवृत्तः । The epic and *purānas* are full of stories of Durvāsas, his arrogance, self-importance, and the undeserving penalties he has inflicted for minor lapses or for testing a character. Kālidāsa shows artful shrewdness in choosing Durvāsas for his dramatic design.
4. *Śāk*. IV-1.
5. Cf. Duṣyanta's reaction to the song. V-2: तच्चेतसा स्मरति नूनमबोधपूर्वं भावस्थिराणि जननान्तरसौहृदानि ॥ And, किं नु खलु गीतं एवंविधार्थं आकर्ण्य इष्टजनविरहाद् ऋतेऽपि बलवद् उत्कण्ठितोऽस्मि ।
6. See *Śāk*. V-9.
7. See the essay "Repudiation of Śakuntalā and Duṣyanta's Dilemma".
8. The offer of marriage is made in III-22; his plea of sincere love in III-18; the high promise in III-19. The word प्रतिष्ठा in 'द्वे प्रतिष्ठे कुलस्य मे' carries a double sense; Śakuntalā will be the 'glory' of the Paurava royal family by being the chief queen; she will also 'bring stability' to the family by vouchsafing a royal heir, a son to Duṣyanta who is childless.
9. For detailed discussion see the essay "The Song of Haṁsapadikā".
10. For the relevant references see VI-10, 13d, 16, 22, 24 (संरोपिते अपि आत्मनि धर्मपत्नी । त्यक्ता मया नाम कुलप्रतिष्ठा ॥ While apologising to Śakuntalā, Duṣyanta says: सुतनु हृदयात् प्रत्यादेशव्यलीकमपैतु ते । किमपि मनसः संमोहो मे तदा बलवान भूत् ॥ VII-24. Before Mārīca he confesses: भगवन्-इमां · गान्धर्वेण विवाहविधिना उपयम्य कस्यचित् कालस्य बन्धुभिरानीतां स्मृतिशैथिल्यात् प्रत्यादिशन् अपराद्धोऽस्मि···कण्वस्य । The illustration of an elephant and its cognition occurs in the following verse, VI-31.
11. IV. 1d : स्मरिष्यति त्वां न स बोधितोऽपि सन् । कथां प्रमत्तः प्रथमं कृतामिव ॥
12. Cf. note (2) above; also Durvāsas' own words : आः अतिथि-परिभाविनि—तपोधनं वेत्सि न माम् उपस्थितम् ।

13. See Priyaṁvadā's observation : कोऽन्यो हुतवहाद् दग्धुं प्रभवति ।
14. Commentators explain the incidence of the curse in this way.
15. See *Raghuvaṁśa*, I. 75-78.
16. Cf. *Ibid.* VIII. 79-81.
17. Kaṇva's opinion is to be found in the message he sends to Duṣyanta through his pupil : त्वमर्हतां प्राग्रसरः स्मृतोऽसि नः । शकुन्तला मूर्तिमती च सत्क्रिया ।। V. 15.

    See also the explanation and assurance Mārīca gives :
    ···ध्यानादवगतोऽस्मि दुर्वाससः शापाद् इयं तपस्विनी सहधर्मचारिणी त्वया प्रत्यादिष्टा न अन्यथा । VII. 31 ff.

9

TRADITIONAL JUDGEMENT ON THE *ŚĀKUNTALA*

Tradition has recorded its opinion about the *Śākuntala* in the popular stanza as follows :

Kāvyeṣu nāṭakam ramyam ramyā tatra Śakuntalā /
Tatrāpi ca caturtho·ṅkaḥ tatra śloka-catuṣṭayam //

[1]

Kāvya covers, for the Sanskrit theorists, the entire field of creative literature. And so, the first quarter of the popular stanza means that drama is the most attractive, charming and artistic of all literary forms. The palm of superiority is given to drama for obvious reasons. Drama is 'visual poetry' (*dṛśya kāvya*); poetry which can not only be read and enjoyed but also seen on the stage and enjoyed in visual representation. The appeal both to the ear and the eye makes drama doubly attractive and delightful.[1]

Drama as a literary form is more difficult to be handled than other forms like poetry or prose fiction. A pure literary artist enjoys a certain freedom in the choice and execution of his subject which is denied to a dramatist. A dramatist must choose a theme or such aspects of the story as have the potentiality of 'drama', that is to say, select moments of tense happening or situations of emotional conflict. These he must knit together in a coherent whole and also present in a limited span of time for the stage. Secondly, a dramatist can use only the dialogue pattern for communicating to his audience. Simple narration, reporting, diaries, letters or descriptions, which a story-writer can freely use, have no or very limited

scope in a drama. The dramatist's dialogue alone must carry the theme, the story and its development, links between suggested happenings, characterization, the author's philosophy and message if any ; in fact, the dialogue spoken by the dramatic characters is the only mode of theatre communication. Besides, the dialogue cannot be merely ordinary conversation ; to be theatrically interesting it must reflect tempers, moods, attitudes, emotions, and also the individualities of characters which must not be mere mouth-pieces of the author but which the dramatist has no opportunity to describe or discuss with his audience. Thirdly, a dramatist has to contend against certain limitations of the stage itself. Happenings like fire, flood, shipwreck, journey in a vehicle, bloody fight, seige of a city and war and private, personal acts cannot be shown on the stage. There are some other things which a dramatist is required to avoid for the sake of social propriety. Unlike a lyric or a fiction which can be read by a single reader in absolute privacy, a dramatic experience is a shared experience which a spectator has to take in the company of and along with the mass of humanity assembled in a theatre. The dramatist of necessity has to avoid the showing of private and intimate moments in the life of a character, lest they caused any embarrassment or shame to some sections of the audience. A dramatist cannot take liberties with social decorum, decency and prevailing morality, which freedom is available to other writers whose works are to be read only. Since a dramatist has to work against such handicaps and restrictions there is a greater demand on his artistic ability and creative power. It is not surprising therefore that drama should be considered as the best of all literary forms. Bharata too says that drama is the meeting ground of all knowledge, lores, arts and crafts.[2]

[2]

The excellence of *Śākuntala*, not unduly stressed, cannot be denied and it rests on several factors. It is the most mature creation of Kālidāsa who had already handled successfully the lyric, the epic and dramatic forms and reached a standard of

excellence which could hardly be equalled, much less surpassed. In handling the dramatic pattern Kālidāsa shows himself to be a conscious artist who is continuously improving his technique and correcting his previous lapses. For example : Kālidāsa could not avoid polygamous heroes, because polygamy was the prevailing order of the day and had social and religious sanction behind it. But in his first play the previous wives of the king-hero create embarrassing situations for him and the hero appears ridiculous. In the second play Kālidāsa restricts the situation to a single scene and shows the queen in a magnanimous mood of forgiveness and reconciliation. In *Śākuntala* Kālidāsa keeps one queen 'behind the curtain' ; and skilfully avoids the stage appearance of the elder queen. Duṣyanta is spared the embarrassment of the inevitable polygamous situation. Similar skill and improved technique are to be observed in the handling of the character of the Vidūṣaka. In *Mālavikāgnimitra* the Vidūṣaka dominates the entire action of the play and the king-hero appears to be not only ridiculous but unheroic also. In the second play Kālidāsa achieves the dramatic development of his story through the foolish blunders of the Vidūṣaka. And the Vidūṣaka in *Śākuntala* contributes to dramatic development not by anything he says or does but actually by his absence from the stage. The dramatist's skill in taking the comic character off the stage is remarkable and artistically very convincing and effective.

The originality of a writer deserves to be judged by the conception of his story and the creative shape he gives to his source material. The basic story in the Mahābhārata is rather primitive, crude and in many details absurd. Out of this material Kālidāsa turns out a story which has the polish of a sophisticated culture, the charm of free and beautiful nature, holiness and tranquillity of *āśrama* life, the elegance and dignity of court atmosphere and the blend of the natural and supernatural which does not strain reality or probability. Kālidāsa changes his characterization transforming the rustic, bargaining, cunning Śakuntalā into an innocent woodland beauty struggling to understand the emotion of love and its impact, retaining at the same time her open-hearted and

loving nature as a child of Nature ; she matures into full womanhood, growing before our eyes like a flower reaching fructification. Duṣyanta is a responsible, dignified king who has stern powers of self-introspection, values of religion and morality, honesty of purpose and sense of justice. A lover of beauty, he is not selfish or callous, though people superficially observing his behaviour may think so without probing the deeper motives that prompt his actions and the central sorrow of childlessness which he tries manfully to cover. Kaṇva in this play is not an extraordinary sage who uses his ascetic powers to change the course of destiny, but a loving father capable of moving emotions and anxious for the welfare of his adopted daughter. Kālidāsa adds a number of new characters like the companions of Śakuntalā, the pupils of Kaṇva, the Tapovana people, the officers and common fisherman in Duṣyanta's kingdom, as well as the divine or semi-divine personages. There are a number of new scenes the poet has invented and the atmosphere which breathes an air of beauty, divinity, harem and court life, the king's administration or ascetic ideal, appropriate to each situation.

Above all, Kālidāsa gives to this love story a meaning and a philosophy. Essentially the *Śākuntala* is a story of star-crossed lovers.[3] But the poet's treatment shows that sincerity and honesty of purpose, faith and devotion, introspection and capacity to understand others, compassion and awareness of human fallibility, can give us an uncommon strength to cope with the adversities of life, suffer acute misery and pain ; that true love will ultimately triumph over all difficulties and ripen into happiness which is akin to divine bliss. The winter of human life is sure to alternate with the spring of beauty and happiness. Kālidāsa's poetic powers combine in this play with his dramatic powers to crown a superb effort at literary creation. The heaven and earth, like the winter and spring, combine here, as Goethe felt, in one name.

[3]

Why should tradition regard the fourth act as the loveliest and the best act of this remarkable play ? Critical appraisal

demands certainly an investigation into the possible causes that must have led to this judgement.

It appears, first, that the main scene of the fourth act deals with a perennial human emotion that is universally experienced. In Kālidāsa's picture the reader/spectator sees not only Kaṇva who is overwhelmed with affection and sorrow at the departure of Śakuntalā to her husband's house, but also a father, in any society on this vast earth, whose heart is moved by the impending separation from a married daughter whom he no longer can claim as his own, and the mind of a tearful girl leaving the parental home for good with vague prospects of a new, unknown life. Parents and daughters at all times, in all ages and climes, have gone through this experience since the dawn of human civilization and will go through it as long as the world and family life last. The experience is partly a satisfaction of having a duty, a family obligation fulfilled, but partly of a new necessary adventure of life ; and whatever it is, there is a pathos and sorrow about it which is too deep for words or tears. It is the universality of the experience that makes the sweet sorrow of the fourth act irresistible in its human appeal.

Secondly, Kālidāsa has chosen to dress the experience in realistic garb. The whole *āśrama* is rushed into a bustling activity with the knowledge of Śakuntalā's coming departure to her husband's house : Anasūyā tells Priyaṁvadā in great hurry to pick up the garland of Bakula flowers that was woven specially for this very occasion and kept in a cocoanut basket suspended from a tree branch to prevent its withering, while she herself rushes to gather the yellow pigment from a deer horn, sacred earth and *Durvā* shoots, all auspicious materials, for Śakuntalā. Śakuntalā has risen up very early and finished her overhead bath before sun-up and is receiving blessings from old ascetic women. Śakuntalā's friends are preparing to deck her with flowers and leaves, the simple ornaments available in the Tapovana ; and are moved to tears at the natural lack of richness of the forest life and by the dread of a permanent separation from their beloved companion. Śakuntalā too is unable to resist her tears because she will not be able to see her friends again ; and the friends are called

upon to check their own emotion and wipe Śakuntalā's tears. The solemn Kaṇva, holding his own emotion in check, is asking Śakuntalā to circumambulate the sacred kindled fire and pronouncing his parental blessings in measured heavy words. Śakuntalā is asking her companions to look after her dear *Vanajyotsnā* with parental care after her departure, and the two companions burst into tears because Śakuntalā will not be there to look after themselves. The female deer is approaching her delivery ; Śakuntalā wants Tāta Kāśyapa to send her news of the doe's safe delivery. The young deer, who had bruised his mouth by trying to eat *darbha* blades and whom Śakuntalā had nursed like a mother, applying *ingudi* oil to the wounds, is pulling Śakuntalā back holding the hem of her garment in his mouth ; and Kaṇva has to caution her against unchecked tears which may blind her and cause an accident in her personal delicate condition. In all these details which the poet delicately sketches there is fine poetry ; but it is coloured with realism. The married daughter leaving the parental home, her companions and friends, the loving people who surround her, including her father ; it is the emotions of these people that Kālidāsa paints here with minute touches consistent with the Tapovana life. The details may vary with different households. But their reality and power of appeal are unmistakable and, in a sense, universal. That is why, we respond to this scene of parting with profound heart.

Thirdly, Kālidāsa looks at this scene of parting neither with an eye of a philosopher nor that of a critic. He deals with emotions of the human heart and, in revealing them with their subtle shades, calls for only an emotional appeal. And it is our normal experience that an emotional appeal is always stronger than the philosophical or intellectual appeal. An emotional appeal is not circumscribed by the factors of time, place, culture or persuasion. An intellectual appeal becomes a challenge to our own powers of understanding and thinking and often results in a guarded stand. But when our heart is touched we are prepared to forget logic and philosophy and allow ourselves to surrender to the emotion. The appeal to emotion therefore will always remain the strength of poetic literature.

Above all, the abiding emotion (*sthāyi-bhāva*) of the situation is that of sorrow (*śoka*) and it explains the universal aesthetic appeal of the fourth act. The loves, joys, angers, disgusts, fears and wonders of mankind, although basically the same, differ in their causes and their reactive expressions ; there may not be any difficulty in understanding these emotions, but their appeal may differ from person to person and from country to country. A love scene in a western story or drama may not be cherished by an Indian reader; and a joke about the Indian Sardarji may not evoke that much laughter from a western reader. Literary response, therefore, demands aesthetic sensibility, a deep understanding and sympathy. But the sorrows of mankind are identical ; tears can move any heart, in any place, at any time.

The still sad music of humanity......

of which Wordsworth speaks, or the sweet sadness about which Shelley sings,

Our sweetest songs are those
That tell of the saddest thought.

express the pain and tears of mankind that go beyond time and place in their emotional appeal and impact. Kālidāsa handles this scene of parting between father and daughter with such delicate art as will move any reader to his emotional depth, making his heart full and his eyes moist with tears. There is no wonder that the fourth act has found a permanent place in appreciative hearts.

[4]

As a matter of fact, the four verses in the fourth act which tradition seems to love very much mirror the emotions that surge in the heart of the father and the married daughter on the brink of the inevitable separation. The first of these four verses, *Yāsyati adya Śakuntalā*... (IV. 6) is a picture of the father's heart profoundly agitated by the idea of parting. Śakuntalā has not left the Tapovana yet ; but the very idea that she will be gone, and gone permanently, overwhelms

Kaṇva. His heart is filled with anxiety ; tears choke his throat ; the eyes are blinded with pain. But the father cannot afford to break down in tears, though memories of the girl from her childhood crowd and agitate his mind. He is expected to give courage and consolation to the poor, bewildered and confused girl and the other members of the family and friends. Besides, the occasion is really an auspicious one, a momentous occasion in the life of the girl. Tears and sorrow must not mar the solemnity and sacredness of the occasion. So, while women folk and friends may be unable to check their tears at the moment of parting, the father of the girl must maintain a sedate appearance and a philosophic control. Kaṇva was really a foster-father to Śakuntalā ; he was also an ascetic, above the sentimentality of common people. Moved to his very being Kaṇva realises now the enormity of suppressed pain and sorrow the real fathers must feel in sending away their daughters from them !

But the father has a dry satisfaction, which is expressed in *Artho hi kanyā parakīya eva* (IV. 22). A daughter is a trust, a treasure which really belongs to a stranger (the future husband of the girl) ; the father is a trustee ; it is his social obligation and religious duty to return the treasure to the proper owner, by getting his daughter married. Having fulfilled this obligation and duty, the father may derive a cold satisfaction and that may help easing the sorrow of the parents ; that is the way of the world.

About the remaining two verses, which have captured the traditional mind, the Sanskrit commentators seem to be at some variance. However, the choice is from *Asmān sādhu vicintya...* (IV. 17), *Śuśrūṣasva gurūn* (IV. 18), *Abhijanavato bhartuḥ ślāghye* (IV. 19) and *Bhūtvā cirāya caturantamahīsapatnī* (IV. 20). These verses reveal the daughter's emotional state of mind and contain the words of advice, encouragement and courage that the father addresses to her. *Śuśrūṣasva gurūn ...* tells the daughter how she must act and react in the household of her husband, endear herself to one and all and strive to become an ideal mistress of the house. The girl's mind is naturally torn with conflicting emotions. At the moment it is weighed down with the memories of the parental

home where she has grown up, with playmates and friends, and the loving care of relatives and parents. Marriage has torn her away from them, like a sandal creeper uprooted from the slopes of Malaya. She has no idea of her new home. But she has to live there for her life. She has only vague hopes about new power, wealth, fulfilment and happiness ; but there is also the dread of the unknown and the unexpected. There is nothing but sacrifice on the part of the father ; on the contrary, the girl may have lost one paradise ; she can hope for another paradise. The moment of parting is not, however, conducive to rationalising the fears and anxieties. The verse *Abhijanavato bhartuḥ ślāghye*...awakens the daughter to her new obligations and responsibilities, and assures her that the doors of her parental home will always be open for her ; only she must neither forget nor mix up her new priorities.

Besides the emotional colours, Kālidāsa has touched in these verses some norms of family life and indicated some criteria for human happiness, in harmony with the social conditions of his times. Kaṇva's advice to the married daughter to 'serve the elders, to treat the co-wives as her friends, to check her anger and never oppose the husband' is out of place in the present social set-up. No father will give such advice to his daughter today ; and no girl will accept it. But it must be remembered that Kālidāsa was speaking to his contemporary audience ; and the urge behind the advice is not an advocacy of the norms of behaviour, which must change with changing times, but a deep desire for a happy and harmonious family life. Is there a father or a daughter who would not want a life of harmony, accord and happiness ?

[5]

There are some other factors in this act which account for its appeal on the level of art. The entire scene of leave-taking has a touching charm and, among other things, it is also due to the significant part that Nature plays in this act. The story of the *Śākuntala* has the back-drop of nature ;

the splendour of Kālidāsa's poetic similes and fancies is mainly derived from their association with nature. But in the fourth act nature seems to have come alive and respond with human emotions. It will be no exaggeration to say that nature is one of the important characters that has joined the party to bid farewell to Śakuntalā. Śakuntalā is a daughter of nature and the love of the two is mutual, reciprocal. She understands nature as if it were human. She has nurtured the *Vanajyotsanā* like a child and, at the proper moment, she got her married to the *Sahakāra* tree. Before leaving the Tapovana she asks her companions to look after her Vanajyotsnā. Like a mother she nurses the young one of the deer ; helps to heal its wounds by applying *ingudi* oil. Nature too responds to this motherly and sisterly affection. A poor forest girl cannot have any ornaments save flowers and sprouts ; but nature would not like to send Śakuntalā to her husband's house with a poor show. To the pupil of Kaṇva, therefore, one tree delivers a pair of silk garments as glossy as the moon ; another tree gives lac-dye to be applied to feet ; the Sylvan Deities then thrust their foliage-red, delicate hands through the tree-leaves and pour a heap of ornaments ! The inmates of the Tapovana are amazed at this unexpected splendour and wealth. They think it is a mental creation of Kaṇva achieved through his power of penance. Poetically, it is nature showing its affection for Śakuntalā ; it is nature's wedding gift to Śakuntalā , a gift from her parental home, on the eve of her departure. How could nature be close-fisted to this girl who refused to quench her thirst till the *āśrama* trees were watered, who checked her natural love of ornaments and never plucked flowers from creepers out of affection for them, who celebrated with jubilation the appearance of first spring blossoms as if mother-nature had delivered a child ?[4] That is why, when Kaṇva utters the farewell call nature answers it through the voice of the koil ; Sylvan Deities arrange lakes on the way of her journey, green with lotus creepers ; wayside trees spread their branches thick with leaves to mitigate the heat of the sun ; and earth spreads a carpet of tender dust as soft as lotus pollens ![5] Of course, at the actual moment of parting

nature is moved and is not able to control its emotions. The doe, like grown up girl, is unable to swallow the mouthful which falls down from the gaping mouth ; the peacocks, like small children, do not understand what is happening, but suddenly stop dancing ; and creepers, like elderly women of the house, stand mute in corners and shed silent tears of dried leaves : [6] In the poet's description of nature, human life seems to be throbbing. Natural emotions appear in marvellous colours. A tender loveliness cloaks the entire act. The moving pathos of the situation acquires hues of poetic art.

Even in handling pathos Kālidāsa shows uncommon skill. While most of the writers will be tempted to overdo the pathos by flowery words and exaggerated gestures and acts, Kālidāsa exercises an artistic restraint. He suggests deep sorrow and compassion ; brings an emotion on the brink of tears, but holds the tears back and avoids a sentimental exhibition of pathos. The very first appearance of Kaṇva is of a loving father who is agitated in mind and overwhelmed with the prospect of being separated from his beloved daughter. But he is an ascetic and immediately controls his emotions. In the presence of Śakuntalā he does not show his grief by word or gesture. Only at one stage, when Śakuntalā pleads with him not to worry his penance-thin body on her account, does Kaṇva lose his control : Śakuntalā, in her daily chores, has made the offering of *nīvāra* grains at the door of their cottage ; they have taken roots in the soil and a crop has sprung up. Kaṇva would see it every day ; and this, as well as other memories, would thrust themselves on his mind, making it impossible for him to forget Śakuntalā who will be miles away from him. But Kaṇva does not allow his mind to be disturbed for more than a moment. Śakuntalā bursts into tears in the presence of her companions ; they wipe her tears and tell her not to cry at the auspicious moment. While bidding good-bye to the Vanajyotsnā Śakuntalā is moved ; the companions are unable to check their tears because the creeper had some one to look after them (the companions themselves) ; but who will take care of Anasūyā and Priyaṁvadā when Śakuntalā goes away ? Kaṇva hastens

at this moment to calm them down by reminding them that their first duty is to console and cheer Śakuntalā. When the young deer stops Śakuntalā and she bursts into tears, Kaṇvas once again tells her gently to check her tears ; they will blind her eyes ; she will miss her steps on the uneven path ; in her delicate condition she must take extreme care of herself. Every moment of overweening sorrow is, thus, held in check. In spite of the profound sorrow there is no crying, no lamentations and gestures of uncontrollable grief. Let the artistic restraint makes the pathos of the situation more poignant, more eloquent and therefore more appealing.

[6]

But what is precisely the place of the fourth act in the dramatic structure ? The curse of Durvāsas, Kaṇva's awareness of the happenings connected with Śakuntalā's marriage during his absence, and Śakuntalā's departure to her husband's house : these are the important links in the development of the dramatic story. The first two are confined to the Interlude and reported in conversation. Kālidāsa could have similarly reported Śakuntalā's departure from the Tapovana ; what was dramatically more important was her meeting with Duṣyanta. The farewell scene was not really essential for the drama, except for its emotional appeal. In consideration of dramatic values the fifth act of confrontation is undoubtedly more thrilling. Even according to Sanskrit theory the *garbha-sandhi* occurs in the fifth act ; and structurally the climax of the story can be located there.[7] Why did Kālidāsa then treat the farewell scene elaborately and raise it to the status of a full act ?

There are certain situations in life, some experiences, which have a perennial value for human beings. Writers are naturally tempted to delineate them if they can and readers too are prepared to accept them, even if they were redundant or irrelevant to the basic structure, for the sheer emotional and aesthetic satisfaction they bring to the mind. We are willing to suspend critical judgement, admire and enjoy the literary art, as the writer has given us an opportunity to

re-live a familiar memorable experience. Such experiences are 'poetic interludes' in literature, places of repose where one can lose oneself in quite contemplation. Here both the writer and the reader can take temporary leave of harsh logic and laws of organic connection . The parting between father and a newly married daughter is, I think, such a situation ; it is an experience of universal occurrence and of universal appeal. The fifth act being the best from the dramatic standpoint, the traditional admiration of the fourth act may be thought one-sided or partial ; the choice of the four verses may also be questioned, because there is no dearth of beautiful verses in the *Śākuntala*. But the play has an undeniable poetic value ; and it is particularly reflected in the solitary grandeur of the fourth act.

The poetic interlude of the fourth act and its repose are necessary, in a way, so far as the emotional impact of theatre experience is concerned. The incident of the dreadful curse, which occurs in the interlude of the act, hangs like a pall over the rosy world of Śakuntalā's love. The fifth act which follows presents a terrible picture of tragedy, shattering the life of Śakuntalā for the time being. When the world of familiar hopes and expectations clashes so suddenly with another world in which the unexpected takes place, it is necessary for art to separate the two clashing worlds by at least a small boundary line to enable the reader/spectator to take in the unusual experience with some relief in emotional tension. Otherwise he will be terribly confused and will fail to grasp the emotional values in the clash of the experiences. Hence, conscious artists introduce a scene of familiar reality between two clashing and emotion-tense situations, to achieve emotional equilibrium. Shakespeare, for example, is keenly aware of this art principle of *emotional equilibrium*. After the bloody scene of Duncan's murder in the *Macbeth* he inserts, therefore, the Porter's scene ; the knocking at the gate brings the porter out ; and we too step out of the world of murder and death.[8] Othello, after strangling Desdemona, breaks down completely ; and this human, familiar reaction brings us back to the world of normal experiences. The farewell scene in the fourth act of the *Śākuntala*, coming

between the scene of the curse and the tragic repudiation of Śakuntalā, serves as a poetic interlude of repose, and as a separating boundary between two dreadful happenings helps to achieve an emotional equilibrium. This is the dramatic significance and achievement of the fourth act.

References

1. cf. Bharata *Nāṭyaśāstra*, (NS.) I. 11 : क्रीडनीयकमिच्छामो दृश्यं श्रव्यं च यद् भवेत् ।
2. cf. NS. I. 116 : न तज्ज्ञानं न तच्छिल्पं न सा विद्या न सा कला ।
   नासौ योगो न तत्कर्म नाट्येऽस्मिन् यन्न दृश्यते ॥
   See my *Bharata-Nāṭya-Mañjarī*, pp. 12-13.
3. See my *Appointment with Kālidāsa*, L.D. Institute of Indology, Ahmedabad, 1982 ; ch. 5, pp. 98 ff.
4. cf. *Śāk*. IV. 9.
5. *Śāk*. IV. 11.
6. *Śāk*. IV. 12.
7. See my *Nāṭya-Mañjarī-Saurabha*, Intr. pp. 114-115.
8. Read De Quincy's beautiful essay, "On the knocking at the Gate in *Macbeth*." *The Collected Writings of Thomas De Quincy*, Vol. X, ed. David Masson ; A & C Black, London, 1897.

10

THE SONG OF HAṀSAPADIKĀ

The fifth act of *Śākuntala* opens with a song. As the curtain goes up, Duṣyanta and his friend the Vidūṣaka are seen seated. From behind the curtain comes the strain of a melodious song floating on the air :

Ahiṇava-mahu-loluvo tumam
Taha paricuṁbia cūamañjarim /
Kamala-vasai-metta-nivvudo
Mahuara, vimharidosi ṇam kaham //[1]

Haṁsapadikā, one of the queens of Duṣyanta, is singing the song. Her voice can be recognised. The song is sung scientifically. Its music enthralls the mind. However, Haṁsapadikā is not practising music merely. The song is surcharged with emotion ; and this fact does not escape the attention of Duṣyanta. The Vidūṣaka digs at Duṣyanta and asks him : "Did you understand the meaning of the song ?"

The meaning of Haṁsapadikā's song is very plain :

> 'You are greedy for ever fresh honey ; but having kissed the mango-blossom with such passion, you are now finding blissful happiness in the sheer company of lotus ; how could you forget the mango-blossom, O Bee ?'

Of course, Duṣyanta has understood the meaning of the song. He turns to the Vidūṣaka with a smile and says, "Once I loved this Haṁsapadikā passionately ; but now I spend my time in the apartment of Vasumatī ; and so, she is taunting me." But Duṣyanta is courteous ; he immediately

sends the Vidūṣaka to Haṁsapadikā in order to comfort her wounded heart. The Vidūṣaka is unwilling to go ; he is afraid that the maids of Haṁsapadikā will overwhelm him, pull his hair, rain blows on him, and, like an ascetic caught by the heavenly nymphs, he will have to give up all hope of liberation. Duṣyanta waves these protests away and forces the Vidūṣaka to go to Haṁsapadikā. The incident is over. What must have been the intention of Kālidāsa in putting this song ?

One dramatic purpose served by the song can obviously be seen : The Vidūṣaka is removed from the scene. The fifth act is mainly concerned with the repudiation of Śakuntalā. Duṣyanta has lost his memory as a result of the curse of Durvāsas. He does not remember to have married Śakuntalā ; and if so, he cannot bring himself to accepting a woman who is a 'stranger' to him : especially when she is pregnant. Had the Vidūṣaka been present on this occasion he would have reminded Duṣyanta of his woodland love : and yet Duṣyanta's mind would have been blank as a result of the curse ; and a situation which was morally very embarrassing would inevitably have resulted ; because whereas the Vidūṣaka's remembering the love affair would have lent support to Śakuntalā's contention, while the King's failure to recollect anything would have appeared as downright meanness. The repudiation of Śakuntalā is based on Duṣyanta's loss of memory and on the inability of Śakuntalā to produce a tangible sign of recognition. On this background Duṣyanta's attitude will appear to be perfectly moral ; for, his statements proceed from a genuine conviction that he could never have been connected with this strange woman. At the same time, Śakuntalā was, from her own point of view, manifestly above suspicion. The meeting between Duṣyanta and Śakuntalā in the fifth act is thus a clash of '*two rights*'. It is this element that makes the conflict so terrific and tragic ; and it upsets the emotional balance of both the parties. For this exciting dramatic effect as well as for the terrible consequence to which the situation leads, it was artistically necessary that both Duṣyanta and Śakuntalā were confident of their own moral positions. The opposition of the Vidūṣaka would have

disturbed the perfect balance of this poignant situation and made Duṣyanta's own defence ridiculous. It was therefore of great importance that the Vidūṣaka was not present on the scene when Śakuntalā arrived. The song of Haṁsapadikā provides a natural excuse for keeping the Vidūṣaka away from the scene of repudiation and thereby removing the threat of moral embarrassment, which would have been so damaging to the character of Duṣyanta.

This, however, is an obvious and an external consequence of the song. Its subtle significance is psychological. The delicacy of Kālidāsa's art consists in the suggestion of the consequences on the subjective side.

In turning from the fourth to the fifth act, we are entering into a new atmosphere. The innocent, sensitive and peaceful atmosphere of the penance-grove has now been replaced by the aristocratic, indifferent and distressed atmosphere of the palace-life. The Nature which responds to human sentiments by the voice of the cuckoo is absent here ; nor is there the philosophic melancholy which can console the parental sadness at the departure of a beloved daughter. On the contrary, there are bees here that wander in search of fresh honey ; there are hearts that burn with the anguish of unsatisfied love : there is uncontrollable passion ; and the distress and the suffering of an agonised mind. The song of Haṁsapadikā is, as it were, an inauguration of this new and strange atmosphere.

The reader naturally senses the suggestive sadness of this atmosphere. What is going to happen to the simple and innocent girl from the woodland in this new atmosphere of estranged love ? As this dreaded doubt dawns on the mind, we recall the dig that the Vidūṣaka had given to Duṣyanta. It is plain therefore that the song of Haṁsapadikā is equivocal : The allusion to the bee, the mango-blossom and the lotus in the song appears to be too obvious to be mistaken even by the so-called dull-headed Vidūṣaka. Duṣyanta must have wandered like a bee in the garden of life ; he met an innocent Haṁsapadikā whose youth was opening like mango-blossom ; out of passion he tasted the honeyed pleasure in her company ; he installed her in his harem and left with her

a memory of passionate love that could not be forgotten. But now this bee has sauntered away in search of fresh honey ; he has turned to the lotus-like Vasumatī and has apparently forgotten Haṁsapadikā, the mango-blossom. The agony of the broken heart of the young blossom is voiced in Haṁsapadikā's song. Does the bee remember ?

But the song is not only a reflection of Haṁsapadikā's heart ; the simple and loyal heart of Śakuntalā seems to be speaking to us through this song. Śakuntalā has left the penance-grove with her heart heavy with sorrow ; she is overwhelmed with the sense of separation ; there is unexpressed hope in her mind about her new home ; but there is also nervous fear. As this Śakuntalā arrives at the threshold of Duṣyanta's palace, we too seem to catch her fear ; for, the suggestion in Haṁspadikā's song has given us a shock. Is Duṣyanta really like a bee ? If the mango-blossom like Haṁsapadikā were to be callously neglected, will this new blossom, namely Śakuntalā, meet with similar fate ? The reaction of Duṣyanta to Haṁsapadikā's song gives us another shock. The song has created an inexpressible yearning in Duṣyanta's mind, but there is no consciousness of a 'separation from the beloved'.[2] Whatever little hope the anxious reader may have entertained is smashed by this remark of Duṣyanta. It is a warning and a suggestion : The repudiation of Śakuntalā that follows is foreshadowed by Haṁsapadikā's song. The song is thus a symbol.

However, it is very necessary to analyse the implications of this symbolic song especially as they reflect the character of Duṣyanta. The song apparently represents Duṣyanta as a bee, full of passion but callous. This is the verdict of all the critics too. They picture Duṣyanta as a selfish lover, hasty and passionate and enraptured by the prospect of sweet honey only. The confession of Haṁsapadikā seems to strengthen this impression. The transformation that takes place in the psychological life of Duṣyanta starts, according to these critics, from the sixth act when, with the recollection of Śakuntalā, his mind is tortured by the blunder he had committed in repudiating his lawfully wedded wife.

However, if Kālidāsa intended to represent Duṣyanta really

in these colours it will be difficult to harmonise some facts given in the play. If Duṣyanta were like a bee by nature and if turning from Haṁsapadikā to Vasumatī he were not to feel any genuine pinch of conscience, then he could as well reject Śakuntalā for still a new-found love. But then, why does he experience an unaccountable yearning and talk of 'loves in previous lives' ?[3] This surely is not the way a honey-mad bee would behave, and especially when fresh honey could be had for a song ! Further, what particular purpose is served by the solemn machinery of the curse, and making the repudiation a direct result of it ? Does the pleasure-loving bee require any excuse to discard one flower and go to another ? These considerations are very vital to the proper understanding of Kālidāsa's version of the *Śākuntala* story. The ultimate picture of noble love and of permanent union that Kālidāsa paints would be certainly lop-sided if one of the partners of love, namely Śakuntalā, were perfectly noble and innocent and the other, namely Duṣyanta, were a passionate but unsteady lover devoid of a serious purpose in life. A noble love that develops into a permanent union surely ought to be a sincere *mutual* love.

Now, Kālidāsa has touched in a number of places the noble shades in the character of Duṣyanta. The most important of these, however, concerns the love-life of Duṣyanta. It is a very pertinent question whether Duṣyanta is really an unsteady lover, selfish like a bee. I am afraid that the answer which Kālidāsa has provided in his play to this question would go against the common verdict of the critics.

Kālidāsa cannot help the fact that Duṣyanta is polygamous. The story that Kālidāsa has selected for his drama and especially the setting he has provided for it make polygamy an inevitable social fact. Leave aside Duṣyanta ; the entire aristocracy of that social period practised polygamy, and the case of Dhanamitra, who carried a flourishing maritime trade, cited in the sixth act, is an instance in point. In the particular social atmosphere it was unavoidable that a rich person was prone to a polygamous and, therefore perhaps, to a varied love-life. Duṣyanta, moreover, has the temperament and passion of an artist who loves beauty.[4] To say, therefore,

that he was averse to the pleasures of love would be unrealistic and contrary to human nature. Duṣyanta has certainly indulged in the sport of love and perhaps the episode of Haṁsapadikā is a peep into this aspect of Duṣyanta's life. But what is of utmost significance is to understand that, even in the lives of men of the type of Duṣyanta, who have roamed like a bee from flower to flower in the garden of life, a situation arises and a turning-point comes which make these carefree wanderers pause and look inside their own hearts. They seem to grasp, as it were in a flash, the profound significance of love. Their attitude immediately becomes grave and serious and a transformation takes place in their lives. Such transformation is not unnatural and is vouched for by the facts of human psychology. I feel that Duṣyanta has already gone through a psychological transformation, and that Kālidāsa has indicated it in this drama by select subtle suggestions.

The most important suggestion in this regard is the fact that Duṣyanta has no son. It is probable that this fact is not a matter of private sorrow merely ; it means that there is no successor to the vast royal riches and the powerful empire that Duṣyanta has built up during his career by dint of his personal prowess. It is quite possible that it is in view of this larger aspect that Kālidāsa has harped on the 'childlessness' of Duṣyanta. The blessing that the ascetics confer on Duṣyanta, in act i, is that he may obtain a son.[5] It implies not only the wish that the serious gap in the private life of Duṣyanta may be filled ; it is also a wish that the spiritual duty of the king to protect the religious life of his own people may not suddenly come to naught for want of a royal successor. When the Vidūṣaka is sent back to the Capital, in act ii, along with the army and the royal paraphernalia he boasts, "I have now become the Heir-apparent".[6] This casual remark conceals the personal tragedy of Duṣyanta : How otherwise could the stupid Vidūṣaka usurp, may be in joke, the title of 'Yuvarāja' ? The poor old mother of Duṣyanta is wearying herself by the observance of vows with the sole hope of securing the continuance of the family line.[7] Duṣyanta is keeping himself busy with the round of his onerous duties,[8]

apparently unconcerned about this serious void in his life ; but the fact must be continuously present in his *subconscious* mind : When the case of Dhanamitra forces the dread reality on his conscious mind Duṣyanta, the mighty hero of many an uncommon battles, collapses into a swoon.[9] That this pillar of strength should crack before our very eyes eould not be a a cheap melodrama intended for a theatrical effect of pathos. It only shows that when the awareness of the void of 'childlessness' reached the level of consciousness, even the mighty life-force of Duṣyanta could not endure the blow. It is this consciousness that could check the irresponsible search for mere pleasures and force any man turn within for a real re-search for happiness. This was what had happened in the life of Duṣyanta. The significance which Kālidāsa attaches to this perfectly human emotion should be clearly realised. The suggestive but eloquent indications that the dramatist has given in the play, along with the picture of Duṣyanta melting under the rush of parental love, in act vii,[10] leaves no doubt that Kālidāsa's Duṣyanta is already a transformed man. If it were not so, and if the loss of the beautiful Śakuntalā and the consequent sense of repentance alone had transformed the bee-like attitude of Duṣyanta, the refrain of Duṣyanta's suffering occurring in the sixth act would at best be only melodramatic in the right literary tradition. What is more, it will inevitably lead us to suspect that Śakuntalā may become another Haṁsapadikā one day ! Such a suspicion will not be unnatural if Duṣyanta of the first five acts were taken to be selfish pleasure-seeker, and the transformation in his nature were traced to the influencc of repentance in the sixth act only. And such a suspicion is apt to destory the higher values of life in *Śākuntala*.

It is essential for aesthetic criticism that the character and romance of Duṣyanta are judged from the angle which the dramatist himself has provided. It is an incorrect moral approach based on considerations which do not belong to Kālidāsa's times that has, in my opinion, led to the misunderstanding of the character of Duṣyanta. It is necessary to remember that the gallant approaches of Duṣyanta, in act i, originate in the first instance out of his keen and sensitive

appreciation of beauty; for, Duṣyanta *is* a lover of beauty.[11] When this appreciation of Śakuntalā's beauty turns unconsciously into a desire for possession—psychologically, a natural and legitimate desire—Duṣyanta is already considering Śakuntalā as a prospective wife.[12] There is neither the irresponsible desire for a mere gratification of the senses, nor the passionate rush for a rash and illegal possession. Will it then be too much to say that the *subconscious* sense of the void in life must have moulded, of course unawaringly, Duṣyanta's desire and given his unexpected passion a seriousness of purpose? Already the ascetics of the Tapovana had blessed Duṣyanta with the blessing of a son. The incorporeal voice, in the fourth act, predicts that a son will be born to Śakuntalā.[13] Ths suggestions in these allusions are irresistible.

The song of Haṁsapadikā must now be interpreted in the light of these suggestions. It is not surprising that Haṁsapadikā dubs Duṣyanta as a bee, as *no one else in this drama does.* She is singing a wailful song of her wounded heart. How could she see beyond herself? And how could she understand the deeper motive why her 'bee' had turned to the *lotus* from the fresh mango-blossom? She was incapable of realising, in her self-centred sorrow, that a subconscious revolution had changed Duṣyanta's nature; so that attractive *blossom* had lost its significance for him, and that his soul was yearning unconsciously for the mellow *fruit*. Unable to fathom the depth of Duṣyanta's desire, she takes him to be a callous bee. But a examination of the symbol that the dramatist has used in the song should reveal the inner motive of Duṣyanta's attitude. The 'mango-blossom' is a symbol of the advent of Spring, of budding youth. On the contrary, the 'lotus' suggests mature growth, adult life. Haṁsapadikā is a girl in blossoming youth; Vasumatī is a mature lady. Haṁsapadikā is referred to in the play by the formal honorific title, *tatrabhavatī* which, as Duṣyanta's queen, was due to her; but Vasumatī is addressed as '*devī*' a title which the crowned queen alone deserves. These titles are obviously indicative of their respective ages as of their positions. And so, if Duṣyanta were a selfish pleasure-seeker, running merely after the gratification of his passion, he ought to have spent his leisure in the apartment of Haṁ-

sapadikā, enjoying the beauty of bursting youth, the fresh loveliness of the mango-blossom. But Duṣyanta has turned back on the tingling pleasure of a hot 'kiss'; he has, on the contrary, turned towards the cool and mellow 'lotus'; it is a pleasure of mere company ('*vasati*'); but living in Vasumatī's apartment gives Duṣyanta the highest pleasure ('*nirvṛti*). This is Haṁsapadikā's own confession. That Duṣyanta should turn away from the intoxicating pleasures of youthful enjoyment and prefer the quite solace of mature company is a mystery to Haṁsapadikā. She is hurt by this preference of Duṣyanta. But just as the pride of her youth makes her incapable of bearing this humiliation, it is equally responsible for her failure to understand the motive behind this change of attitude. It appears that the 'blossom' remained only a blossom and could not fulfil its 'promise of fruit'. Duṣyanta had to turn away from it, unwillingly though, because he has no more interested in mere love-making. We do feel sorry for Haṁsapadikā and sympathise with her. But does that give us any justification for misunderstanding Duṣyanta's character and behaviour? Do we want to commit the same youthful error which Haṁsapadikā did in her blindness and sorrow ?

The song of Haṁsapadikā is thus one more subtle, and perhaps a very significant, suggestion through which the dramatist reveals the psychological transformation of Duṣyanta. The neglect of Haṁsapadikā is *not* due to the bee-like, selfish temperament of Duṣyanta; it is the unconscious reaction of a subconscious frustration: a frustration that has created a tragic void in the life of Duṣyanta. On this background alone can we properly understand the unaccountable restlessness that Duṣyanta experiences by hearing the song. If the final meeting of Duṣyanta and Śakuntalā were a permanent union of two loving hearts, as the critics assume, it necessarily presupposes a complete transformation; and such a transformation cannot be the result of mere separation and suffering. It is, therefore, necessary to admit, on the strength of the textual evidence, that Kālidāsa conceived his Duṣyanta as a transformed lover from the beginning of his story. Thus considered, the song of Haṁsapadikā is a poetic symbol of Duṣyanta's psychological transformation.

References

1. The Sanskrit chāyā of the song is as follows :
अभिनवमधुलोलुपस्त्वं
तथा परिचुम्ब्य चूतमञ्जरीम् ।
कमलवसतिमात्रनिर्वृतो
मधुकर, विस्मृतोऽस्येनां कथम् ॥ (*Śāk*. V. i.)
2. Read : 'राजा— (आत्मगतम्) किं नु खलु गीतमेवंविधार्थमाकर्ण्य अिष्टजनविरहाद् ऋतेऽपि बलवदुत्कण्ठतोऽस्मि ।'
3. Cf. Act V, verse 2, and esp. 'तच्चेतसा स्मरति नूनमबोधपूर्वं । भावस्थिराणि जननान्तरसौहृदानि ॥'
4. Cf. Duṣyanta's appreciation of *Tapovana* life, I. 14, 15; of the loveliness of the *Āśrama* girls: 'अहो, मधुरमासां दर्शनम् ।' his confession, I. 17; also I.20.
5. Cf. I.12 : 'पुत्र' अेवंगुणोपेतं चक्रवर्तिनमवाप्नुहि ॥'
6. Cf. 'तेण हि जुवराओम्हि दाणिं संवुत्तो ।'
7. Cf. the message which Karabhaka brings from Duṣyanta's mother : 'आगामिनि चतुर्थदिवसे पुत्रपिण्डपालनो नामोपवासो भविष्यति ।' (Act II).
8. See, Act V, verses 4, 5, 6, 7, 8.
9. See, Act VI, 25, and the following stage-direction, 'मोहमुपगतः ।'
10. Cf. 'किं नु खलु बालेऽस्मिन्नौरस अिव पुत्रे स्निह्यति मे मनः ।' and verse 17 ('आलक्ष्यदन्तमुकुलान्' etc.) in Act VII.
11. See, the references quoted under foot-note (4).
12. Cf. 1.22 : 'असंशयं क्षत्रपरिग्रहक्षमा' etc.
13. Read, Act IV, 4 :
'दुष्यन्तेनाहितं तेजो दधानां भूतये भुवः ।
अवेहि तनयां ब्रह्मन्नग्निगर्भां शमीमिव ॥'

11

THE REPUDIATION OF ŚAKUNTALĀ AND DUṢYANTA'S DILEMMA

The repudiation of Śakuntalā in the fifth act of *Śākuntala* has a deep dramatic and human value. It proves to be a tragic turning point in the development of the stòry affecting the characters involved as well as the readers who are a mute witness to the intensely moving spectacle.

The rejection is a very unexpected and cruel blow to Śakuntalā. She had left the *tapovana* in a very disturbed and agitated condition of mind. Leaving her father Kāśyapa, the mother-like Gautamī and her beloved friends, as also the familiar deer and creepers of the *tapovana* with whom she had lived all these years of her life, was not certainly easy for that simple girl. It was not merely leave-taking ; a separation that had to be unavoidably faced ; it was a kind of uprooting : Śakuntalā was not quite sure that a sandal creeper uprooted from the slope of Malaya mountain would live even for a short while on an alien land.[1] She felt that she belonged to the *tapovana* which was the only home on earth for her. The frame of mind in which Śakuntalā found herself was inevitable, but it was perfectly natural also. Every newly-wed girl on the brink of separation from her parental home is apt to feel the emotions which Śakuntalā did. And the worldly wise Tāta Kāśyapa had, therefore, no difficulty in assuaging these fears of Śakuntalā, and he could promise his daughter a happy and prosperous life in her new home.[2]

But there was another fear in Śakuntalā's mind, vague and not yet clearly defined : Her husband whom she had

wed out of her free will and love, and without consulting the elders, had failed to send a messenger who was to take her to her new home. Śakuntalā was not aware that continuously thinking only of her husband, in which she was so completely absorbed as to be unmindful even of her own self[3], she had invited on her head a dreadful curse from the impatient, irascible Durvāsas. Kaṇva who was also unaware of the incident of the curse was not worried, at the moment, about Śakuntalā's fate. On the contrary, no sooner did he come to learn about Śakuntalā's love-marriage to Duṣyanta and her approaching motherhood than he made immediate arrangements for sending her to her husband's house. He could not have thought of anything amiss at the moment because he had implicit faith in the goodness of his daughter as also in the thorough uprightness of Duṣyanta.[4] The two friends of Śakuntalā were, of course, disturbed. Anasūyā even thought for a moment that the innocent Śakuntalā was cruelly betrayed by the king for whom the woodland girl may be only one among several women whom he was privileged to enjoy.[5] Priyaṁvadā was also worried ; but she had, like Kaṇva, an obvious trust in the virtuous character of Duṣyanta.[6] And when Anasūyā remembered about the curse, her doubts about Duṣyanta's behaviour at least were set at rest.[7] The fear, however, was still there ; and the only remedy the two friends could think of for avoiding a probable calamity was Duṣyanta's signet-ring which, as the sage had promised, would counteract the effect of the curse. Belief in this promise calmed down their minds ; for, Śakuntalā had in her own hands an unfailing remedy for avoiding any untoward happening.[8]

But the unvoidable happened ; the unfailing remedy failed. Śakuntalā lost the ring on her way to Duṣyanta's Capital. It is easy to see that the curse alone is not responsible for Śakuntalā's rejection, because the ring could have nullified it. It is the loss of the ring that sealed the tragic fate of Śakuntalā. Obviously Kālidāsa has coupled the curse and the ring together to make the repudiation inevitable. The two—the curse and the loss of the ring—could be attributed, in the final analysis, to the untoward destiny of

Śakuntalā, which the poet has hinted at at the beginning of the play.[9] But if the curse were an unexpected happening, a blow from the dark, the loss of the ring appears to me to be almost natural, something that, one was afraid, would happen ! How did the ring come to be lost at all ? It was Duṣyanta's own ring which he had presented to Śakuntalā as a memento. It was not made for her specially. *The ring which fitted only Duṣyanta's finger could not have fitted perfectly the feminine slender fingers of Śakuntalā.* She must have worn it loosely rather ; but as long as she was thinking only of her husband her attention was concentrated on the ring of which she must have taken great care indeed ; for, it was a symbol of their married love. But when Śakuntalā left the *tapovana* her mind was overwhelmed with a number of thoughts. The long journey, the sights and sounds on the way, the companions who were with her, the homage to the Śacī Tīrtha—all these factors could have temporarily distracted her mind. And particularly at the time of doing the salutations at the holy waters the ring, which had *a loose fitting*, must have slipped unconsciously from her slender finger. That this was the most natural way the ring came to be lost is confirmed by the words of Gautamī.[10] Kālidāsa appears to suggest this explanation for the loss of the ring in a very simple but nonetheless artistic manner.

A part of the picture of repudiation, from the side of Śakuntalā, is over. With the only means at her disposal to prove the truth of her statements lost, Śakuntalā was without any defence and completely at the mercy of the cruel fate which was playing with her life. But the other part of the picture, that from Duṣyanta's side, is yet to be drawn. It is perhaps more important than the first part and more difficult to be drawn also. For, while human sympathy for Śakuntalā's tragic suffering could be naturally assured, it was not so easy to sympathise with Duṣyanta, understand the position in which he was to find himself, and appreciate the difficulties that he was required to face. A common reaction is to abuse Duṣyanta, hold him responsible for what happened to Śakuntalā. Such a reaction would completely ruin the picture that Kālidāsa intended to present. Dramatic art

demands that we fully sympathised with Duṣyanta while our heart was moved with what the poor Śakuntalā had to go through. Duṣyanta is the hero of the dramatic composition ; he must not lose sympathy of the reader, particularly at a crucial moment. Witness how Shakespeare creates and maintains sympathy of his audience for his tragic heroes even though their faults are apalling and some of them wade through innocent human blood. Thus viewed Kālidāsa's problem is not only a problem of human psychology, it is also an artistic problem which the dramatist was called upon to present without a single error or a false move. The understanding of the scene of repudiation involves a careful unfolding of the poet's artistic design and thereby a proper perspective on the character of Duṣyanta, who, I am afraid, has been much misunderstood.

It is not intended to present the whole character of Duṣyanta here, but to explain those elements of characterisation only which are connected with the scene of repudiation. An important factor from the outside in this regard is, of course, the curse of Durvāsas, which has most completely wiped out the memory of Śakuntalā from the mind of Duṣyanta. In introducing this innovation[11] of a *duex ex machina* Kālidāsa has most effectively altered the entire shape of the legendary plot and saved his hero from being a calculating hypocrite, a deliberate liar, that he appears to be in the original story. Duṣyanta's forgetfulness is an inevitable consequence of a curse that Śakuntalā (not Duṣyanta himself) had invited on her head, and Duṣyanta is only an unconscious, nay innocent victim of it. The immediate cause of repudiation lies, thus, *outside* the character of Duṣyanta and he is not personally responsible for what happened to Śakuntalā. It is in this way that Kālidāsa establishes the integrity of Duṣyanta's character. Duṣyanta's stand is justifiable from his point of view : How could he call himself a husband of the woman and a father to the child that she was bearing when he did not *remember*, in spite of hard thinking, having, married her.[12] The Vidūṣaka could probably have reminded Duṣyanta of the *Śakuntalā affair*. The dismissal of the Vidūṣaka on the eve of this

scene is, therefore, another important factor in the artistic design of Kālidāsa and it makes Duṣyanta's stand unexceptionable. It shows to us how Duṣyanta could not have acted otherwise than as he did.

It is this peculiar position that makes the scene of repudiation a conflict of *two rights.* The full significance of the curse, thus, consists not only in 'white-washing' the character of Duṣyanta, as some people have imagined, but in really making also the situation an intensely moving, disturbingly poignant and helplessly tragic drama of clashing human emotions.

It is on this background that the character of Duṣyanta must be judged ; and what he says and does, as also what other characters say about him, have to be weighed. With the instrumentality of the curse and the loss of the ring Śakuntalā's repudiation was a foregone conclusion. What is therefore important, both from a human as well as an artistic point of view, is how Duṣyanta acquits himself in the situation that has been inevitably created.

The common reactions to Duṣyanta's stand can easily be anticipated. Anasūyā imagined that Duṣyanta was a casual lover whose promises were wordy bubbles. But she soon realised that she was wrong in thus criticising Duṣyanta. Haṁsapadikā, on the eve of the scene of repudiation, dubs Duṣyanta as a honey-sucking bee who did not care for the wounded heart of a mango blossom, as, in other words, a fickle and heartless lover. But is the accusation correct ? The young queen's suffering is genuine. But she could not see in her passionate agony that if Duṣyanta had neglected 'a young blossom' where maddening pleasure was assured, it was only to go to a 'lotus', in whose maturity the only pleasure available was that of a serene and understanding company. Duṣyanta was not on a fresh hunt for tantalising pleasures. In fact, his soul was wearied of the sensation of flesh and was secretly pining for that deep pleasure, the blessing of a son, which is the real bliss of married life.[13] Neither Haṁsapadikā nor the other queen could give Duṣyanta this happiness. He had turned to the elderly Vasumatī because in the emptiness of his life he needed,

above all, a sympathetic understanding which the mature queen alone was expected to have.[14]

The two pupils from Kaṇva's hermitage feel ill at ease on entering into the presence of Duṣyanta. Śārṅgarava describes the place as 'a house enveloped in fire'[15] ; and the comparison suggests that Śakuntalā herself was going to discover shortly that the royal palace which was to be her home was a house enveloped in fire. The suggestion is very artistic. But it illumines only her personal tragedy ; and beyond that it would be an artistic mistake to stretch the simile, as is often done, to include a vicious reflection on palace life. The life in an *āśrama* and that in a palace are bound to be different ; and any one loving one kind of life in preference to the other is apt to detest the other kind. In fact, Śārṅgarava himself explains that his particular reaction is due to his familiarity with only the life of solitude in a *tapovana*.[16] Śāradvata confirms this explanation and states that his own reaction has been pretty similar. He too does not like the city people addicted as they are to the pleasures of the world.[17] The art of Kālidāsa in depicting accurately the feelings of the hermit boys and the simple dramatic suggestion which the expression of their feelings carries must not, therefore, be misunderstood. For, if palace life were vicious and Duṣyanta were a dishonest cheat, it is inconceivable that Kaṇva would have consented to this marriage and given his blessings to the couple. It is a mistake of literary judgment to misrepresent an artist's design and interpret the motives by our personal emotions. What is significant in Kālidāsa's dramatic art is that he has taken away all the words out of the mouth of critics and made his own dramatic characters bluntly attack the integrity of Duṣyanta.

Later, when Duṣyanta denies any connection with Śakuntalā (because he could not have done anything else under the circumstances). Śārṅgarava levels very grave charges against Duṣyanta: He refuses to be impressed by the regal splendour and Duṣyanta.[18] He calls Duṣyanta power-mad, one who is capable of disowning his own actions, of flouting moral duty, of deliberately insulting others.[19] He describes Duṣyanta as a

robber who violently seized an innocent daughter of a sage.[20] With deep irony and bitter sarcasm he paints Duṣyanta as a seasoned diplomat for whom duplicity is both a science of theory and an art of practice.[21] It is not possible to imagine that any one else could have accused Duṣyanta to his face with such atrocious charges ! That Duṣyanta permitted this outrage on liberty, especially when the charges were totally false, and, instead of shutting up the impetuous outsider which he could have legitimately done under his own rightful powers, proceeded to vindicate his conduct before the assembled crowd, speaks very highly for the true democratic instincts of Duṣyanta, for the ruling desire of his life to treat his subjects as his own children[22] and to toil for public good at a willing sacrifice of his own pleasures.[23]

It is in this way that Kālidāsa asserts his ideal of kingship and sets his hero in this scene as a conscientious king. The attacks on the character of Duṣyanta are, of course, one-sided. No character in the drama knows fully the real position of Duṣyanta, as the reader has an opportunity to do. But these attacks are presented in the play for the artistic purpose of setting down the easy reaction which is human and not unexpected, for satisfying every critic of Duṣyanta's conduct, and for testing through the fire of such criticism the pure gold of Duṣyanta's character.[24]

Śakuntalā and the *āśrama* party could not be blamed for thinking that Duṣyanta was a cheat. But how did the situation present itself to Duṣyanta? Duṣyanta could not but think that it was an attempt to foist a wayward forest girl on him. The complete blank in his memory, for which, it must be reiterated, he was not responsible, could not give him any other predisposition. The entire attitude of Duṣyanta is coloured by this inevitable impression. He indulges in irony when Śakuntalā is trying to prove her credentials[25] He defies the old Gautamī and accuses the whole class of women of an instinctive capacity for selfish fraud in the act of self-preservation.[26] He refuses to be taken in by any trick, and confidently asserts that self-controlled people like him would not even dream of touching a stranger's wife.[27]

In taking this attitude Duṣyanta must not be imagined to

be washing his hands of an inconvenient and regrettable affair. Throughout this scene Kālidāsa has repeatedly stressed a single important trait of Duṣyanta's character: *His unshakable regard for moral virtue.* Confident that there is nothing unethical in his own grain,[28] Duṣyanta feels that it is his *duty* not only to resist a moral evil in his own conduct but also to prevent it in others. He knows that he must love his subjects; but he must at the same time punish wayward conduct with a firm hand of authority.[29] He was obliged as a king to administer *dharma.*[30] Hence twice does he check himself and restrain the Pratīhārī too when their appreciation of Śakuntalā exceptional beauty was apt to border on unjustified interest in a married woman. He observes that it is not meet to look so closely at a woman who is someone else's wife.[31] The Pratīhārī could not but admire the moral regard that Duṣyanta had shown, especially when falling for Śakuntalā was so easy and humanly understandable also.[32]

In his talk with Śakuntalā and Śārṅgarava Duṣyanta has adopted only a firm but correct moral stand. He refutes Śakuntalā's charge of betrayal by appealing to *her* own sense of moral virtue :

"Silence evil !" he says; "why do you wish to drag the good name of your family into mud, and pull me also along with you?"[33]

The whole issue comes to a head when Śārṅgarava finally challenges Duṣyanta's moral integrity by referring to his forgetfulness of the past.[34] The reply that Duṣyanta gives contains, in my opinion, the *crux* of the whole problem. Duṣyanta says:

> "May be that I am infatuated; may be that this lady is lying. Would you wish me to repudiate my wife, or be defiled by a contact with another man's wife?"[35]

This is the real issue as far as the situation is presented to Duṣyanta. The problem is purely ethical, moral: It is a question of choosing between two moral evils—abandoning a wife, or accepting some one else's wife as one's own ! This is Duṣyanta's *dilemma.*

It is curious that this dilemma can be perfectly expressed in terms of Western Logic, thus:

I *Hypothetical Major Premiss*	If I am infatuated, I shall be committing the sin of abandoning my wife; but if she is telling a lie, I will be committing the sin of touching another man's wife.
II *Disjunctive Minor*	But either I am infatuated or she is telling a lie.
III *Conclusion* (*Disjunctive*)	Therefore, I shall be committing either the sin of abandoning a wife, or that of touching another man's wife !

Symbolically expressed, the *dilemma* is :

If A then B, if C then D

Either A or C

Therefore, either B or D.

Technically speaking, it is a *Complex Constructive Dilemma.*[36]

It is interesting to note that a formal *rebuttal* of the dilemma, by transposing the consequents and denying them according to rule, does not offer any real solution to the problem. For example, Duṣyanta can be confronted with the following *counter-dilemma*:

I *Major Premiss*	If you are infatuated, you will *not* be committing the sin of touching another man's wife; if she is telling a lie, you will *not* be committing the sin of abandoning your wife.
II *Minor Premiss*	But either you are infatuated, or she is telling a lie.
III *Conclusion*	Therefore, you will be committing neither sin !

The counter-dilemma has given a conclusion which is exactly opposed to the first conclusion. And yet no one is near a solution. The important question still remains unanswered, namely, which of the two *antecedents* is incorrect?

Was Duṣyanta infatuated? Or, was Śakuntalā telling a lie? The real refutation of the dilemma comes only when the discovery of the ring proves that Duṣyanta was infatuated and one *horn* of the dilemma breaks down. Till then the dilemma remains completely unanswerable.

That is way, when Duṣyanta presents his problem in the form of a moral dilemma, the assembled crowd is struck dumb. And Duṣyanta's Purohita who has been silent during the whole exchange comes forward to intervene and offers a practical way out of the *impasse* by inviting Śakuntalā to stay in his house.

It cannot be said that Duṣyanta is stiff or deliberately cruel. He had shown excellent regard towards ascetics by receiving them with correct ceremonial ritual,[37] and by listening, with becoming humility, to the message of Kaṇva brought by them.[38] During the conversation also he does not allow himself to be ruffled by outrageous charges made against him. On the contrary Duṣyanta has the righteous grace to bend before Śārṅgarava and seek his judgment in solving his dilemma.[39] Though unable to believe the story which Śakuntalā told, his mind is unbiased enough to see that her anger was genuine;[40] and for a moment he feels whether he may not be wrong in judging her. Towards the end Duṣyanta is in a very perturbed mood. Though he talks of having banished the subject from his mind, his heart is nevertheless in agony.[41] These are unmistakable signs of a sincere mind, of a conscientious person. It is interesting to note that the cool-headed Śāradvata had already left the issue to Duṣyanta's better judgment.[42] And Śārṅgarava who had held a passionate brief for Śakuntalā turns against her and asks her to fend for herself.[43] The change of reaction must be as much due to Śakuntalā's inability to prove her own statements as to the unimpeachable stand that Duṣyanta had taken.

Of course, Duṣyanta could not have acted otherwise. *Betbeen the two sins, accepting another man's wife was a greater moral crime. Duṣyanta had to choose the lesser evil. And so, he rejected Śakuntalā.* Kālidāsa has, thus, presented the issue of repudiation as *a grave moral dilemma.*

References

1. Cf. कथमिदानीं तातस्याङ्कात्परिभ्रष्टा मलयतटोन्मूलिता चन्दनलतेव देशान्तरे जीवितं धारयिष्ये । IV. 18. ff.
2. Cf. IV. 19, 20.
3. Cf. Priyaṁvadā's observation : भर्तृगतया चिन्तयात्मानपि नैषा विभावयति । किं पुनरागन्तुकम् । IV. 1. ff.
4. Cf. V. 15 : त्वमर्हतां प्राग्रसरः स्मृतोऽसि नः ।
   शकुन्तला मूर्तिमती च सत्क्रिया ॥
5. Cf. अद्य स राजर्षिः···अन्तःपुरसमागत इतोगतं वृत्तान्तं स्मरति वा न वेति । IV. ff.
   काम इदानीं सकामो भवतु येनासत्यसन्धे जने शुद्धहृदया सखी पदं कारिता । IV. 3. ff.
6. Cf. विस्रब्धा भव । न तादृशा आकृतिविशेषा गुणविरोधिनो भवन्ति । IV.
7. Cf. अथवा दुर्वासःकोप (*v. l.* दुर्वाससः शापः) एष विकारयति । अन्यथा कथं स राजर्षिस्तादृशानि मन्त्रयित्वा, एतावत्कालस्य लेखमात्रमपि न विसृजति । IV. 3. ff.
8. Priyaṁvadā observes : शक्यमिदानीमाश्वसितुम् । अस्ति तेन राजर्षिणा संप्रस्थितेन स्वनामधेयाङ्कितमङ्गुलीयकं स्मरणीयमिति शकुन्तलाया हस्ते स्वयमेव पिनद्धम् । तस्मिन् स्वाधीनोपाया शकुन्तला भविष्यति । IV. 1. ff.
9. Cf. Vaikhānasa's statement : इदानीमेव दुहितरं शकुन्तलामतिथिसत्कारायादिश्य दैवमस्याः प्रतिकूलं शमयितुं सोमतीर्थं गतः । I. 10. ff.
10. Cf. नूनं ते शक्रावताराभ्यन्तरे शचीतीर्थसलिलं वन्दमानायाः प्रभ्रष्टमङ्गुलीयकम् । V. 21. ff.
11. It is well known that the curse is not present in the MBh. story.
12. Cf. Duṣyanta's statement : भोस्तपोधनाः, चिन्तयन्नपि न खलु स्वीकरणमत्रभवत्याः स्मरामि । तत्कथमिमामभिव्यक्तलक्षणां प्रत्यात्मानं क्षेत्रिणमाशङ्कमानः प्रतिपत्स्ये । V. 19. ff.
13. Cf., for instance, Bhavabhūti, *Uttararāmacarita*, III. 17 :
    अन्तःकरणतत्त्वस्य दम्पत्योः स्नेहसंश्रयात् ।
    आनन्दग्रन्थिरेकोऽयमपत्यमिति बध्यते ॥

14. I have fully explained this view in 'The Song of Haṁsapadikā'.
15. Cf. V. 10. 'हुतवहपरीतं गृहमिव'.
16. Cf. V. 10 c : 'शश्वत्परिचितविविक्तेन मनसा'.
17. Cf. स्थाने भवान् पुरप्रवेशादित्थंभूतः संवृत्तः । अहमपि... V. II.
18. Cf. भो महाब्राह्मण काममेतदभिनन्दनीयं तथापि वयमत्र मध्यस्थाः । and V. 10, 12.
19. Cf. V. 18.
20. Cf. V. 20 (the simile 'दस्युरिव').
21. Cf. V. 25.
22. Cf. V. 5 ('प्रजाः प्रजाः स्वा इव तन्त्रयित्वा').
23. Cf. V. 7 ('स्वसुखनिरभिलाषः खिद्यसे लोकहेतोः').
24. Kālidāsa seems to have applied his own dictum : हेम्नः संलक्ष्यते ह्यग्नौ विशुद्धिः श्यामिकापि वा । *Raghu*. I. 10.
25. Cf. Duṣyanta's remarks : उदारः कल्पः । श्रोतव्यमिदानीं संवृत्तम् । शृणुमस्तावत् । V.21. ff.
26. Cf. V. 22 ('स्त्रीणामशिक्षितपटुत्वम्...').
27. Cf. V. 28.
28. Cf. Duṣyanta's assertions addressed to Śārṅgarava:
    कुतोऽयमसत्कल्पनाप्रश्नः । V. 17. ff; and,
    विनिपातः पौरवैः प्रार्थ्यत इति न श्रद्धेयम् । V. 25 ff.
29. Cf. V. 8 'नियमयसि विमार्गप्रस्थितानात्तदण्डः...'. Also I. 22, esp. 'शासितरि दुर्विनीतानाम्'.
30. Cf. Duṣyanta's self-introduction made to Anasūryā : ...यः पौरवेण राज्ञा धर्माधिकारे नियुक्तः सोऽहम्...' I. 22. ff. ; V. 14.
31. Cf. भवतु । अनिर्वर्णनीयं परकलत्रं नाम । V. 13. ff.
32. Cf. Pratīhārī's observation : अहो धर्मापेक्षिता भर्तुः । ईदृशं नाम सुखोपनतं रूपं दृष्ट्वा कोऽन्यो विचारयति । V. 19. ff.
33. Cf. V. 21 a : शान्तं पापम् । व्यपदेशमाविलयितुं किमीहसे जनमिमं च पातयितुम् ।
34. Cf. यदा तु पूर्ववृत्तमन्यसङ्गाद् विस्मृतो भवांस्तदा कथमधर्मभीरुः । V. 28. ff.
35. V. 29 : मूढः स्यामहमेषा वा वदेन्मिथ्येति संशये ।
    दारत्यागी भवाम्याहो परस्त्रीस्पर्शपांसुलः ॥

36. It is possible to present the dilemma as a *Simple Constructive* one, taking the idea of sin (of abandonment, and of accepting another man's wife) as a common *consequent* for the two *antecedents*, so that the conclusion will be a categorical proposition. Symbolically expressed the dilemma will be :

If A, then C ; if B, then C
Either A or B
Therefore, C.

37. Cf. Duṣyanta's instructions to his Purohita : अमूनाश्रमवासिनः श्रौतेन विधिना सत्कृत्य स्वयमेव प्रवेशयितुमर्हसीति । अहमप्यत्र तपस्विदर्शनोचिते प्रदेशे स्थितः प्रतिपालयामि । V. 5. ff.
38. Cf. अवहितोऽस्मि । V. 13. ff.; अर्थवान् खलु मे राजशब्दः । V. 14. ff.
39. Cf. भवन्तमेवात्र गुरुलाघवं पृच्छामि । V. 28. ff.
40. Cf. संदिग्धबुद्धिं मां कुर्वन्नकैतव इवास्याः कोपो लक्ष्यते । and V. 23.
41. Cf. प्रागपि सोऽस्माभिरर्थः प्रत्यादिष्ट एव । V. 30. ff. But also, वेत्रवति, पर्याकुलोऽस्मि । V. 30. ff. and V. 31.
42. Cf. V. 26. (तदेषा भवतः पत्नी त्यज वैनां गृहाण वा ।).
43. Cf. किं पुराभागे स्वातन्त्र्यमवलम्बसे । V. 26. ff.; and V. 27.

12

'HEROES' OF KĀLIDĀSA

All old literature tends to portray ideal life and ideal characters. The writers were inclined to narrate the tale of a noble life, paint men and women who exemplified eternal values in their thoughts and behaviour ; and while delighting the mind with the beauty of art, it was also desired to enlighten and uplift the social consciousness of a people. All old literature abounds therefore with the lives and deeds of gods, sages, mythological and legendary heroes, kings and nobles, virtuous women and heroic mothers. Such men and women belong to the top level of society and lead all aspects of life, religious, social and political. They naturally become also leaders or 'heroes' of literary compositions.

The poems and plays of Kālidāsa could not be an exception to this general literary trend. The 'hero' of his *Kumārasaṁbhava* is Śiva, Mahādeva. *Meghadūta* has the semi-divine Yakṣa. The 'heroes' of *Raghuvaṁśa* and the three dramas are noble kings. In the portrayal of divine or exalted characters supernatural colours are probably unavoidable. But great writers often endow them with human thoughts and emotions; and such artistic touches bring these remote characters and their actions within our understanding, appreciation and admiration ; we feel a kinship with them in their joys and sorrows. Besides divine, mythological and legendary characters, the Sanskrit literature portrays King also as an ideal character. This is not due always to a desire to flatter power, wealth or patronage ; though such human failing is natural, the Sanskrit literature can boast of spirited poets too who

have defied the power of a king and scorned royal splendour. The real reason why king came to be the 'hero' in Sanskrit compositions is that a king in ancient India was actually the *leader* (*netā*) of religious, social and political life. A young prince had to go through very severe training before he attained kingship ; the Sanskrit literature describes this process of education and hard discipline. Theorists like Kauṭilya have expounded the science of polity and laid down a daily time-table for a king to discharge his administrative duties towards his kingdom. Kauṭilya has taught that 'The happiness of a king lies in the happiness of his subjects ; their benefit is king's own benefit' (प्रजासुखे सुखं राज्ञः प्रजानां च हिते हितम् ।) The Sanskrit poets uphold this ideal for their kingly hero. Kālidāsa says about Duṣyanta :

स्वसुखनिरभिलाषः खिद्यसे लोकहेतोः ।

Disregarding personal comfort and pleasure Duṣyanta tired himself day after day for the sake of his people ; but this was the mode of his life. A tree bears the heat of the Sun on its head but gives only cool shade to those who seek the shelter of its roots. The supreme *dharma* of a Ruler is selfless service to the people.

When King Dilīpa visits with his queen Sudakṣiṇā the hermitage of his family-priest Vasiṣṭha, to obtain his blessings for a son, the whole Nature is eager to serve him. People from villages and towns bring him gifts of milk and fruits ; and Dilīpa speaks to all of them, asking their names and inquiring after their welfare. In modern parlance this is *jana-saṁparka*, mass contact ; and it is an outcome of mutual affection and care. Reghu made a conquest of all the quarters in his military campaign and gave away the vast wealth he had acquired in gifts by performing the *Sarvajit* Sacrifice. A pupil Kautsa came to Raghu to ask for money to pay his *guru-dakṣiṇā* ; finding his treasury empty, Raghu decided to attack Kubera to pay the gift money to boy ; Kubera showered during the night gold and diamonds in the royal treasury ; Raghu asked Kautsa to take away all the wealth ; the boy picked up only what he wanted to pay his guru. Such munificent donors and selfless beggars must indeed be rare ! Kālidāsa shows that

Rāma abandoned Sītā only to fulfil his kingly duty, to satisfy the wishes of his people. The royal heroes of Kālīdāsa are thus ideal men, dedicated servants of their subjects.

स पिता पितरस्तासां केवलं जन्महेतवः ।

The king is the real father of the people ; their fathers are only proginators : This description truly applies to the Raghu-kings.

An epic which deals with the life of a king-hero or some remarkable achievements in a hero's life may not be able to touch his private and family life even in its vast expanse. But a drama can do so and we often do get an insight into the love life of a king-hero with its fulfilments and frustrations, the happiness and pangs of separation, through the dramatic pictures. The emotions of love and of sorrow are universally shared ; and in spite of the fact that the heroes are mythological figures, rather remote from common life of humanity, it is easy to share and sympathise with the sorrows of their private lives. The sorrow of childlessness which wrecked Dilīpa's life and the trying devotion with which he served the daughter of the Celestial Cow ; the unbearable sorrow of Aja at the sudden death of Indumatī ; the unfortunate curse hanging over the life of Daśaratha ; the unbounded misery that marred the love of Rāma and Sītā ; the pangs of separation from the beloved that the Yakṣa experienced ; these are poetic pictures that profoundly move our hearts. And equally moving are the pictures in the dramas : Purūravas losing his mind over the mysterious disappearance of Urvaśī and wandering madly through the forest in search of her ; the tender but heart-rending separation of a married daughter from her father in the *Śākuntala* ; and the agony of Duṣyanta when, on regaining the lost memory, he realizes that he should not have repudiated Śakuntalā. In these experiences of love and sorrow the heroes becomes the representatives of humanity, one of us.

It is true that love is the major theme of Sanskrit poetry and drama. But this is true of all literature in any language of the world. The interest of man and woman in each other is eternal and is bound to remain so, though the literary and artistic pictures of love may differ somewhat according to the

culture and ethos of a people In stead of taking any objection to delineation of love from moral or purist standpoint, it is of greater importance to examine the problem in the light of the changing attitudes enforced by passage of time. A modern reader of Sanskrit dramas is apt to look upon the royal heroes as rather flippant in their love affairs, ready to fall in love with any beautiful girl that crosses their path, pine for unfulfilled love, and leave the cares of the kingdom to their ministers so as to be free for their own pleasures. What is surprising is that enlightened critics and some professors too seem to take Haṁsapadikā's charge against Duṣyanta, 'a roaming bee ever in search of fresh honey' (अभिनवमधुलोलुप मधुकर) as literary true and as a fitting description of the royal heroes of Kālidāsa add of Sanskrit writers generally.

But this is an erroneous literary criticism. A literature cannot disregard the literary conventions of its time, the beliefs and faiths of the social life in which it grows, and the values of life for thought and conduct which the particular times honour and uphold. These : conventions, beliefs and values : change ; and when they have changed with the passage of time and social transformation, it is likely that the life of bygone days and its literature may not please our taste. But that is no reason to dislike or condemn old literature ; because a writer is bound by the contemporary life he lives ; and if he were to ignore its facets and values, his writing is apt to be rejected and forgotten by his contemporary public It is therefore incorrect to judge old literature by the literary and social standards and values of our present-day life.

Kālidāsa accepts the Indian religious philosophy which divides man's life into four 'stages' with their attendant obligations. Exemplifying this philosophy in the case of Raghu-kings, Kālidāsa says :

शैशवेऽभ्यस्तविद्यानां
यौवने विषयैषिणाम् ।
वार्धके मुनिवृत्तीनां
योगेनान्ते तनुत्यजाम् ॥

Thorough education and study during childhood ; enjoyment of material plearures during the period of youth ; renunciation of worldly responsibilities, repairing to the seclusion of a forest and leading ascetic life as old age approaches ; and leaving the mortal frame preparing for liberation by yogic practices and meditation : this was the way the Raghu-kings led their lives. Obligations and pleasures have their appointed place in human life ; and the *Āśrama* philosophy seeks to provide a just and balanced distribution of them. If the king-heroes therefore are pictured as enjoying the pleasures of love, it must be remembered that the enjoyment has come on the background of a hard, disciplined life of strict education at the house of a guru, and that the kings are in their youth. Besides, the king-heroes are also brave, skilled in military lore ; so, their *śṛṅgāra* is not the lustful pursuit of idle philanderers but the repose and indulgence of warriors and fighting men.

Another aspect which disturbs a modern reader is that the king-heroes are polygamous. This again was the social order of the day which had religious sanction behind it. Polygamy was also a mark of manly vigour and of economic prestige. With the exception of Rāma and Yakṣa all the heroes of Kālidāsa are polygamous. But how could any writer present a false picture of the society in which he lives and which forms the background of his stories ? We may disapprove of the social state which allowed the male such domination over the woman ; but it is wrong to criticise a poet for presenting the realities of contemporary life. On the contrary, poets who have a social consciousness do try to render 'poetic justice' to the woman whom social custom and religious precept had made a chattel and a servant of her husband. Duṣyanta could not help if his interest in Haṁsapadikā had waned, as she remained only a 'mango blossom' in spite of her youth, and failed to give him a son ; but he cares for her feelings and sends his friend to console her. And Duṣyanta falls at the feet of Śakuntalā to beg her pardon, although he had deserted her only under the influence of a curse. The heroes of Kālidāsa are men of feeling, full of courtesy, and treat their wives on a footing of equality, though society had made them

lords and masters. This is the general picture of royal heroes in Sanskrit Literature : Democracy seems to rule in the kingdom of love.

Literary devices like curse must similarly be interpreted with caution. It is easy to dismiss the curse of Durvāsas as Kālidāsa's attempt to 'whitewash' Duṣyanta and save him from the moral blame of abandoning his wife. But the poet uses the curse as the *cause* of Duṣyanta's loss of memory ; and he does it because curse of a sage and its efficacy were a matter of firn religious faith of the people of his times. Do we find fault with Shakespeare for using witches who predict the doom of Macbeth, for making the ghost of Hamlet's father walk on the stage and reveal the secret of his murder in human terms ? The curse is thus only an art device ; the fact is the loss of memory, which is vouched by modern medical science as *amnesia*. It is presumable that, had Kālidāsa written the *Śākuntala* today, he would have shown Duṣyanta losing his memory temporarily by a shell-shock or a war-wound to the brain !

This means that in understanding the heroes of Kālidāsa and of Sanskrit literature we cannot afford to lose sight of the contemporary context. The pictures are ideal ; and the ideals are fostered by contemporary values of life, social and religious sanctions, and current literary conventions. Disagreement with these may not be a bar to artistic appraisal.

13

KĀLIDĀSA'S TREATMENT OF THE SUPERNATURAL

[1]

Study of the supernatural in a dramatic composition has a literary and an aesthetic purpose. Bharata[1] recognises *adbhuta* among the eight *nāṭya-rasas* and as a natural consequence of *vīra* or the heroic emotion and heroic actions. The prowess and achievements of a magnificent hero are inevitably marvellous and evoke a sense of wonder (*vismaya*), which is the basis of *adbhuta-rasa* In designating this feeling of wonder as *rasa* Bharata, no doubt, suggests that it is certainly enjoyable and it affords pleasure, to most of the spectators of a dramatic performance.

Bharata points out also that the feeling of wonder is evoked in literary and dramatic compositions as much by the presence of divine or semi-divine characters, demons, goblins and ghosts, by acts of marvel or magic which seem to be above the normal laws of cause and effect, defying logical analysis or explanation; as by ordinary happenings which take place completely unexpectedly. Bharata suggests that if a dramatist were not to have any scope for introducing the *adbhuta* or the feeling of wonder in his story, he should at least have it towards the end of the dramatic story.[2] This he could do by introducing a divine character to bring the story to a pleasant ending, by working a magical spectacle or simply by giving the story an unexpected and surprising turn. The impact of the marvellous or the unexpected is generally always pleasurable and spectators can take the total experience with a sense of relish and delight, at least in the case of Sanskrit drama.

The motives which prompt a literary artist to use the *adbhuta* may, of course, vary. Sometimes a writer may be overwhelmed with situations of his own innovation and is unable to find a natural way out of them. He then uses supernatural or accidental devices to glide over the difficult junctures in his story. Sometimes the writer's intention is to give an imaginative and romantic colouring to his story and the marvellous certainly helps to achieve such an effect. Critically speaking, the former is a sign of weak story structure ; the other is a deliberately imposed construction in order to transport the reader/spectator to an imaginary fairy land or to the super human world of divinities.

The Sanskrit literature seems to fall somewhere between these two points, because most of the poetic and dramatic stories derive their material from mythology, legends and folk tales where the supernatural elements are inextricably mixed with natural and human elements. It is therefore not easy to study the supernatural as a separate element of art construction and estimate its literary and aesthetic values. Nevertheless it is interesting to see how Sanskrit writers handle the supernatural elements in their stories and attempt their evaluation. It is with this idea that the plays of Kālidāsa are considered here.

[2]

Kālidāsa's *Mālavikāgnimitra* is really a social play dealing with the love of king Agnimitra for (ostensibly) a harem maid, Mālavikā. The prevailing atmosphere is that of court and harem life and it has the air of contemporary realism. The only elements in this story structure that appear to evoke a feeling of wonder are the episode of *Aśoka-dohada* (acts iii and v) and the narration of the attack of forest marauders on the travelling party of Mālavikā and her escort (act v). The *Aśoka-dohada* episode need not be treated as a supernatural event ; it may be attributed to the contemporary belief of the people that certain flowering trees do entertain a longing and blossom only when the longing, like that of a pregnant woman, is fulfilled in a particular way.[3] Kālidāsa has used

this belief for his dramatic purpose of archieving the marriage of the lovers. The narration in the final act is partly used for gathering the scattered threads of the dramatic story and for clarifying the mystery surrounding Mālavikā. It also partly fulfills the dramatic dictum that the last juncture of the story should contain an *adbhuta* element.[4] The war-like attack described here naturally evokes the feeling of wonder. In addition, the account also reveals that the supposed harem maid Mālavikā is really a Vidarbha princess. The unexpected revelation causes an agreeable and pleasant surprise and leads the story to a happy conclusion. Incidentally, Mālavikā's disguise as a serving maid is explained as a necessary result of an astrological prediction ; this too is a part of contemporary belief.

[3]

The story of *Vikramorvaśīya* is of the love of a mortal king Purūravas and the nymph Urvaśī, technically a *troṭaka* type of drama.[5] It moves literally between the two worlds of heaven and earth. Apart from Urvaśī and her companions like Citralekha, Menakā, Sahajanyā, other heavenly characters like Indra, Nārada, Bharatamuni and sages, a Devadūta, figure in the story or are referred to ; there are demons like Keśin and the Asura hosts. Kālidāsa seems to retain these superhuman characters and also the particular marvellous powers associated with them as integral parts of the story. And so, the abduction of Urvaśī by the demon Keśin in the aerial region and the rescue which Purūravas effects occur as natural events in the dramatic story (act i). To enable the earthly hero to accomplish this marvellous rescue of a heavenly damsel in distress Kālidāsa bestows on him the supernatural power of moving through aerial regions and fly his chariot on top of clouds ; this power is attributed to the king's being a scion of the Moon family and to his ritual round to worship the Sun deity.

Urvaśī being an Apsara has naturally some special supernatural powers. She can move easily through the heavenly and aerial regions. She can come down to the earth

at her will. She has the power to make herself invisible to hostile and mortal eyes, a power granted to her by Indra after the incident of her abduction (*tiraskariṇī, śikhā-bandhana-vidyā*) (acts ii, iii). She can produce a birch leaf and writing materials at will to inscribe a love-letter (act ii). Later, it is her special power that enables her and Purūravas to spend their honeymoon in the divine Gandhamādana *vana* ; and she is able to transform a cloud into an aerial car to take them back to the king's Capital.

The transformation of Urvaśī into a creeper is partly a divine miracle and partly the result of a curse. The divine Kārtikeya had prohibited women from entering his sacred *vana* and had laid a curse ; Urvaśī enters this *vana* in her blind and jealous anger ; and so she is turned into a creeper due to the divine imposition. But another divine element, the *saṅgamanīya maṇi*, a jewel supposed to be formed from the lac-dye oozing from the divine Gaurī's foot (the mother of Kārtikeya) restores her back to her original form. Purūravas is helped by an 'incorporeal voice' to pick up this gem of union during his wandering search for the lost Urvaśī, (act iv).

The dramatic performance alluded to (act iii) has also supernatural or divine elements infused into it. The play is about the love and marriage of Viṣṇu and Lakṣmī and is writtten by the goddess Saraswati. Bharatamuni, who lives in the company of gods, has directed it ; and it is produced with the help of celestial nymphs before the heavenly audience.

Consistent with the beliefs of the time, Kālidāsa uses the device of curse twice : Bharatamuni curses Urvaśī and banishes her from the heavens for her psychological blunder in reciting the dramatic dialogue. But the curse advances the story enabling Urvaśī to marry Purūravas and live with him on the earth. Indra's favour countermands the curse and Urvaśī is able to return to the heavens after she has borne a son to the king. The curse of Kārtikeya, which turns Urvaśī into a creeper, produces a scene (act iv) which becomes a test and positive proof of Purūravas' insane but profoundly moving

love for Urvaśī ; and it really cements their marital ties, symbolising the immortality of true love.

Nārada is a popular and beloved purāṇic figure who can move through the triple worlds at his free will and desire. Kālidāsa introduces him towards the end (act v), partly in fulfilment of the dictum to bring the *adbhuta* in the last (*nirvahaṇa*) juncture of the story ; but mainly for ensuring the union of Purūravas and Urvaśī to be a life-long and permanent union of love. Indira requires the help Purūravas for fighting against his asura enemies ; it is the king's *vikrama* or valour that leads Indra to modify the previous stipulation and permit Urvaśī to live with Purūravas for the entire span of his life. Nārada conveys this divine message, as he performs the coronation of Āyus, the son of the immortal and the mortal couple.

The study shows that Kālidāsa does not tamper with the divine and supernatural elements inherent in this unusual story and change or modify them. The natural human emotions and their aspects like love, jealousy, anger, reconciliation are juxtaposed, placed side by side, with supernatural and divine characters, their actions and powers, in this play. In a sense, the story of *Vikramorvaśīya* is a real marriage of heaven and earth, none losing their individuality.

[4]

The story of *Śākuntala* is suffused with supernatural colours and carries a divine halo. Even in the treatment Kālidāsa has given to it the story moves several times between heaven and earth. The hermitage of Kaṇva, which is situated on earth and which is the scene of action for the first four acts, has an atmosphere of prefect calm, charm and beauty, freedom and playfulness ; there is here something of the colourful, romantic, nay, even unearthly. The hermitage of Mārīca, situated on the Hemakūṭa between the Avaha and Pravaha wind-paths where the last act is performed, is definitely more divine than the heavens because the Parents of the Universe dwell here, and its denizens practise, with superb indifference to maddening heavenly pleasures, the most severe

penances.[6] The only break in this unearthly and heavenly atmosphere is that of fifth and the sixth acts where the scene is that of Duṣyanta's court and royal garden. But it is a short gap. Śakuntalā jumps off to heavenly regions before she has stayed here for some time ; and Duṣyanta seems anxious to be lifted up where his beloved wife is. Yes, the story of *Śākuntala* too seems to be replete with romance and supernatural elements.

Yet it is also true that Kālidāsa is studiously attempting to make that story as human as possible. He does not present his theme as a pure romance between a semidivine girl and a most majestic king, but as a picture of engrossing interaction and moving conflict of human emotions. A study of the supernatural in this play, therefore, becomes all the more interesting.

While considering the supernatural elements in *Śākuntala* some details may be conveniently excluded : For example, the atmosphere of the two scenes of action mentioned above ; the birth and the miraculous protection of Śakuntalā ; the ability of Duṣyanta to fight invisible demons and to use missiles ;[7] Duṣyanta's friendship with Indra and his journey to heavens in the divine car ; and finally, the appearance of divine or celestial characters. Kālidāsa may have retained these elements as integral parts of his story and as a concession to the credulity of his contemporary audience. But there are other elements which Kālidāsa seem to use with significant motive and for special dramatic purpose. These supernatural elements, in the order of their occurrence, are as follows :

(1) *The Curse of Durvāsas* : The first in importance, as it is the first in the order of occurrence, is the curse of *Durvāsas* the dramatic significance of which has been aptly recognised. Kālidāsa invented this curse to pave the way for the natural repudiation of Śakuntalā. The curse takes away Duṣyanta's memory altogether and thus makes Śakuntalā's rejection inevitable and even convincing to a point. It is on the basis of this curse that Kālidāsa has made the fifth act, where the pregnant Śakuntalā comes to meet and live with Duṣyanta, so full of dramatic intent and of absorbing interest. As contrasted

with the tame and hypocritical affair that it is in the Mahābhārata story, this situation in the fifth act is a terrible conflict of rising tempers and emotions ; there is a pathetic awe in the words which are bandied by the contending parties ; and there is an awful pathos in the sentiments which flow with concealed tears. For, in Kālidāsa's treatment the conflict of the two lovers becomes a conflict between two truths, neither of which can ever brook compromise or defeat. Besides lending this dignity of dramatic intent the curse also serves to ennoble the character of Duṣyanta by making his inward struggle true and genuine. For Śakuntalā, this humiliation and the sufferings which follow are a tragic blow of the '*pratikūla Daiva*'. It has been truly said that the curse of Durvāsas is the pivot on which the story turns. But there is something more in this element. It appears that there is a point in not bringing Durvāsas on the stage and in allowing the terrible curse to be heard only from behind the curtain. The motive of economy of characterisation and the probable difficulty of managing the whole scene on the stage are no doubt natural and good justifications. But they are not enough. From the point of view of special effect the curse will appear to be a symbol of Destiny of Fate. The Fate is averse to Śakuntalā. A clear suggestion of it has been already given to us when Kālidāsa told us in the first act that Kaṇva had gone on a long pilgrimage to Somatīrtha to pacify the adverse destiny of Śakuntalā. Śakuntalā herself is too full of fateful utterances. The hand of Destiny seems to be visible throughout the play. And here in the curse of Durvāsas the Destiny has become *audible* as it were ! That is why Durvāsas pronounces his curse from behind the curtain. Without one's fault, unawaringly, surprisingly, and fatefully, the curse comes, so to say, as a stab in the back and as such it must come from the dark. When all of a sudden a loud, ill-tempered, irascible voice breaks into those fateful words our hearts flutter in our breasts. It is the voice of Destiny that is playing with Śakuntalā's life. As the song of Haṁsapadikā heard from behind the curtain carries with it a mild and yet real effect of restlessness[8] even so the curse thus pronounced produces an effect vibrating with terror.

(2) *The Divine Voice in the Fire-Sanctuary* : It announces in a meterical speech that Śakuntalā bears the glorious seed of Duṣyanta as the Śamī tree bears fire. The author of the Mahābhārata story has used the divine voice to vindicate Śakuntalā's truthfulness and innocence. Kālidāsa uses it here to announce Śakuntalā's marriage with Duṣyanta and her pregnancy, which the Mahābhārata author had left to Śakuntalā to narrate unblushingly. Kālidāsa's Śakuntalā is a coy, tender and refined maiden and it would have been an outrage on our sensibility were she to narrate the event. Her two friends Anasūyā and Priyaṁvadā, who would be too willing to help her, are so completely preoccupied with the consequences of this event (*viz.*, the worry about Duṣyanta who has gone away to his capital and about the reaction of Tāta Kāśyapa)[9] that they are at a loss to find the proper mood and the necessary courage for the narration. The divine voice, therefore, comes to help out of the difficult and embarrassing situation the full knowledge of which is confined only to the three girls. And it comes conveying almost a sense of relief. It might be said that the knowledge of the event, necessary as it definitely is, could have easily dawned on Kaṇva if he had used the divine powers which sages like him are known to possess. But to suggest this is to ignore Kālidāsa's design. Kālidāsa has created out of the legendary Kaṇva a loving father and a perfectly natural human being. If it were not so, he need not have undertaken the holy pilgrimage and yet could have averted the consequences of the fateful curse by his supernatural powers. It is interesting to note further that Kaṇva does not compel the divine voice. It breaks forth spontaneously suggesting thereby that the event has not only an individual value, but that the very universe is interested in it. For it is an announcement of the birth of Śakuntalā's child which was to bring prosperity to mankind.[10]

(3) *The gifts of the Tapovana trees to Śakuntalā* : On the eve of her departure from her father's hermitage, Śakuntalā receives from the trees a pair of silken garments, lac-dye and ornaments. It appears to be a spontaneous gesture on the part of Nature. But old Gautamī suspects that it might be a 'mental creation' of Kaṇva. The two pupils who were

commanded to fetch flowers from the trees are obviously surprised at the unexpected gifts received and they, in their turn, ascribe the miracle to the 'prowess of Tāta Kāśyapa' and look upon it as a 'service' rendered unto him by the world of vegetation. It could have been so. Kālidāsa leaves the point vague. But in this very vagueness there is a very significant implication which is left to be conjectured. Again we find that Kaṇva has not used his divine powers to force this gift. The inmates of the Tapovana are free to imagine that the things happen due to the power of Kaṇva. But at the same time it is true that it is a voluntary act on the part of the trees. And more than the 'prowess' of Kaṇva, it is the love of Nature for Śakuntalā that is responsible for this kindly gift! It must be remembered that for Kālidāsa Nature is not inanimate; it is alive, and alive with human understanding and emotions. There is a perfect bond of sympathy and love between Nature and Śakuntalā. Śakuntalā, who herself is a child of Nature, never doubts for a moment the feelings of Nature and reciprocates her fondness by her own love: Does she not look upon the creepers and trees of the Tapovana as her sisters and brothers ?[11] And has she not celebrated the marriage of her beloved Vanajyotsnā with the Sahakāra ? Priyaṁvadā has no hesitation in admiring Śakuntalā as the bride of the Kesara tree[12] And Tāta Kāśyapa, fully aware of the mutual love, begs the trees, on behalf of Śakuntalā to give her their leave to depart ![13] The trees also speak with the voice of the Koil and convey their farewell to her ![14] Nature is not an unimportant character in the play ! She has wept at Śakuntalā's departure ![15] The gift, therefore, is a farewell gift—a sort of a wedding present given to Śakuntalā on behalf of Nature.

(4) *The divine rescue of Śakuntalā* : At the close of the fifth act we learn that a celestial light in female shape suddenly comes and takes away Śakuntalā to the Apsaras-*tīrtha*. This is quite an unexpected development in the dramatic action. We find that towards the end of her encounter with Duṣyanta, Śakuntalā is completely disillusioned. Her 'high-soaring hopes' about her future life are smashed to the ground. With all her vigour, truthful words, appeal of love and the use of

the feminine weapon of persuasion, Śakuntalā has failed to carry conviction to Duṣyanta. On top of her failure she has received an undisguised stigma of being a liar and a wanton woman. Duṣyanta has made that charge without a reserve. Śārṅgarava too, who was as reverential of Śakuntalā as her own father, feels that Śakuntalā might be telling a lie and ruthlessly orders her to stay back. What is the poor Śakuntalā to do ? Can she go and live with the Purohita ? It would be an insult added to injury. A greater mortification is difficult to imagine. Human efforts have come to a stand-still. There is no power on earth that can help Śakuntalā out of her shame. It is high time, therefore, that the powers above intervened. The supernatural element comes in where the natural has proved impotent to help virtue. Śakuntalā is lifted up to the higher regions of justice as though she were too good for this wicked, cruel world !

There is a further point. 'The light in female form' that carries away Śakuntalā is none else but Menakā, her own mother ! It might be a coincidence that Menakā happened to serve her round at the Apsaras-*tīrtha*, just when Duṣyanta on earth was repudiating Śakuntalā. But Menakā saw the plight in which her daughter was placed and moved by her own love, rushed to rescue her. That is quite expected of a mother ! And is it, therefore, Menakā's atonement for her past sin when in an unmotherly way she threw her babe in the wild wood on the chance care of the Śakunta birds ?

(5) *Sānumatī's presence in Duṣyanta's garden* : Sānumatī, a friend of Menakā, is seen moving invisible through the greater part of the sixth act. Being an Apsaras, this is not impossible for her. But by her introduction Kālidāsa achieves many a purpose. We note that after Śakuntalā was taken away to the divine regions by Menakā no information about her has reached us. Between the fifth and the sixth acts a considerable interval of six years has passed. Yet there is no news of Śakuntalā; nor is there any apparent means of getting it because Śakuntalā is no longer on this mortal earth. Under the circumstances Sānumatī serves to bring the necessary news. Secondly, even though we are in a position to know what is happening to Duṣyanta because it takes place right

under our eyes, how is the anxious, suffering Śakuntalā to know the same ? Sānumatī is thus a communicating link so far as Śakuntalā is concerned. We learn from her that Śakuntalā is observing the vow of a '*virahiṇī*' and that she has given birth to a son. We also know that when Sānumatī will fly back to heavens she will report to Śakuntalā Duṣyanta's sufferings. Finally, Sānumatī moves invisibly behind Duṣyanta and as he bursts forth in his varied lamentations she provides a sort of a running commentary to his sufferings which otherwise were apt to become monotonous and depressing. She delights in Duṣyanta's misery.[16] But we are aware, as Sānumatī herself is, that every utterance of Duṣyanta is an evidence of his love for Śakuntalā and the misery of Duṣyanta, symbolical thus of love, is a much needed assurance to Śakuntalā in her unabated devotion and cheerless penance for him.

(6) *The intervention of Mātali* : The introduction and action of Mātalī, the charioteer of Indra, are explained by Kālidāsa himself. Mātalī comes to invite Duṣyanta on behalf of Indra to lead the divine forces against the Durjaya demons. It is a tribute to Duṣyanta's valour and his friendship with the King of gods. Further, the intention of Mātalī in manhandling the Vidūṣaka is, on his own telling, only to rouse Duṣyanta who had swooned away as a culmination of his heart-rending grief. It was necessary to revoke Duṣyanta's innate prowess which was for sometime smothered under his overwhelming obsession. And as one would stir the embers to kindle a flame or provoke a serpent, so did Mātalī throw a challenge to Duṣyanta to inflame his dormant prowess.[17] Besides, this episode affords a suitable turn, half comic, half heroic, to the long drawn-out act and relieves the pensive monotony of the main scene. Finally, Mātalī's intervention prepares the inevitable step towards the reunion of Duṣyanta with Śakuntalā. She is already in the divine regions, we know, and cannot climb down to meet Duṣyanta. He must, therefore, be lifted up to her. The invitation which Mātalī has brought accomplishes this purpose by giving Duṣyanta an opportunity to go to heavens.

The scene in Kaṇva's hermitage and the scene of the

reunion on the Hemakūṭa mountain are not separately considered in this discussion on principle. Though both these scenes are surrounded by romantic and supernatural air, they are intensely human; human with the joy of the lovers and the delight of their sympathisers ; to this Kālidāsa has added, in the last act, the supreme bliss of a child.

Writing in those days when the supernatural was perhaps regarded as quite natural and handling a theme which was intrinsically crammed with supernatural elements, the treatment that Kālidāsa has given is thoroughly artistic.

Kālidāsa, in the first place, has shorn the original Mahābhārata story of many of its supernatural details (as *e.g.* Kaṇva's miraculous powers, the birth of Śakuntalā's child after three years of pregnancy and so on), which bestow on it unimaginative and incomprehensible absurdities. He has made the characters very human and has painted a many-coloured picture of human emotions and feelings. Further, Kālidāsa has used the supernatural element when it was quite necessary to do so and never for smoothening or evading the difficulties of dramatic construction.

Where he has retained the supernatural elements it is to secure a romantic air to the story and to lift it up rather in an idealistic way. And where he has deliberately introduced the supernatural, it is to achieve some delicate, necessary or important dramatic purpose.

Kālidāsa's treatment of the supernatural is, therefore, a factor of the greatness of *Śākuntala*.

References

1. For theoretical information see Nāṭyaśāstra (NS) VI, section on *Adbhuta-rasa*, GOS ed. with Abhinava's commentary.
2. NS. ch. 18. 43 : निर्वहणे कर्तव्यो नित्यं हि रसोऽद्भुतस्तज्ज्ञैः ॥
3. Cf. the popular verse :

   स्त्रीणां स्पर्शात् प्रियङ्गुर्विकसति बकुलः शीधुगण्डूषसेकात्
   पादाघातादशोकः तिलककुरबकौ वीक्षणालिङ्गनाभयाम् ।
   मन्दारो नर्मवाक्यात् पटुमृदुहसनाच्चम्पको वक्त्रवातात्
   चूतो गीतान्नमेरुर्विकसति च पुरो नर्तनात् कर्णिकारः ॥

   Also Mallinātha on *Uttara-Megha*, 18.

4. See note (2) above. Also *Daśarūpaka*, III, 34d :
   कुर्यान्निर्वहणेऽद्भुतम् ॥
5. See my *Nāṭya-Mañjarī-Saurabha*, BORI, 1981; pp. 129, 139.
6. Cf. VII. 12 : यत् काङ्क्षन्ति तपोभिरन्यमुनयस्तस्मिंस्तपस्यन्तयमी ॥
7. See III. 1, 26; VI. 28.
8. See V. 2
9. Cf. अनसूया— अद्य स राजर्षिः ...आत्मनो नगरं प्रविश्यान्तःपुरसमागत इतोगतं वृत्तान्तं स्मरति वा न वेति । And प्रियंवदा— तात् इदानीमिमं वृत्तान्तं श्रुत्वा न जाने किं प्रतिपत्स्यत इति । Act IV, Interlude. The two girls try to console each other, but the worry and slight fear are there. Besides, it is rather awkward for them to narrate the story of this love.
10. Cf. IV. 3 The purpose is indicated by the phrase, 'भूतये भुवः'
11. Cf. 'अस्ति मे सोदरस्नेह एतेषु' Act I.
12. Cf. 'त्वयोपगतया लतासनाथ इवायं केसरवृक्षकः प्रतिभाति ।' I.
13. Cf. IV. 9 'सेयं याति शकुन्तला' etc.
14. Cf. IV. 10. 'परभृतविरुतं कलं यथा प्रतिवचनीकृतमेभिरीदृशम् ॥'
15. Cf. IV. 12. 'अपसृतपाण्डुपत्रा मुञ्चन्त्यश्रूणीव लताः ॥'
16. Cf. 'अस्य संतापेनाहंरमे ।' Act. VI.
17. Cf. VI. 31.

14

THE DRAMATIC ART OF KĀLIDĀSA

[1]

Kālidāsa is the pride of Sanskrit Literature, a genius who excelled in all the major literary forms, lyrical and epic and poetry and drama. Kālidāsa's *Raghuvaṁśa* set the norm for a graceful epic ; his *Meghadūta* which forged a new path for lyric poetry, has been an immortal poem of tender, moving emotion and of unparalleled literary beauty. It found many imitators but no equal. Kālidāsa's three plays also proved to be models of dramatic composition worthy of emulation ; and his *Śākuntala* is the finest treasure of Sanskrit literature, whose extraordinary combination of poetic and dramatic excellence sent a master of German poetry and drama into raptures.[1] Here an attempt is made to examine some aspects of the great dramatic art of Kālidāsa.

[2]

The theory of Sanskrit drama looks upon drama essentially as an *abhineya kāvya*, that is to say, as a composition to be presented on the stage with the help of the fourfold histrionic modes of acting[2] : The verbal (*vācika*), comprising the delivery of dramatic speeches ; the physical (*āṅgika*), involving movements of the body and its limbs and the gestures ; the make-up and costumes (*āhārya*) which an actor must use to impersonate or represent a character, and the stage-props and accessories (*nepathyaja*) which are necessary to carry a visual impact of the scene of action and of the happenings

shown on the stage ; and the psycho-somatic representation (*sāttvika*) where the actor's emotional state of mind and his spontaneous gestures and facial expression combine in harmony to convey the inner content. This aspect of *abhinaya* distinguishes drama from other types of literary compositions like poetry, which are only to be read and not seen or stage-represented. But this aspect of drama can best be considered only in terms of a stage performance of a play. In a theoretical discussion like this we could touch it only indirectly and attend more to the literary side of a drama. However, the *abhinaya* aspect brings to the fore two important components of drama : The dialogue pattern through which the dramatic story is unfolded ; and the content of drama which, according to Bharata, is *sva-bhāva* of the peoples of the world, their experience of emotion or their emotional reactions to wordly experiences. In terms of dramatic theory, this is *rasa-bhāva*, the actual happenings and actions serving to reveal the emotion or emotional impact due to an experience. The Sanskrit drama is, thus, conceived more as a picture of human emotions (*rasa-bhāva*) rather than as a story of action or conflict—which come in the drama not as necessary components but as a means revelatory of the emotion-charged experience.

From a literary point of view, a drama is a story (*vastu*) of some achievement (*phala-prāpti*) on the part of principal character, the leader or hero (*netā*), who is presented as more or less an ideal character, equipped with definite, worthy qualities. The achievement may refer to the winning of a girl, love and marriage, conquering an adversary, acquiring or restoring a kingdom, or an act of noble sacrifice for a cause and so on.[3] The story proceeds by well-marked stages of development (*avasthā*) till the final fruit is accomplished. The progress of the gradual development is worked out with smooth links connected causally and reasonably (*sandhis* and *sandhi-aṅgas*). For filling out his story, a dramatist will naturally sow the seed (*bīja*) first, help its sprouting, continuously harp on his central theme (*bindu*), use small and big incidents and episodes (*prakarī, patākā*), work towards the denouement (*kārya*) (the components known as *artha-prakṛti-s*).[4]

There is another precaution that a dramatist has to take : He must choose the happenings which can be actually shown on the stage and the happenings which he must avoid out of propriety or owing to the natural limitations of a theatre-stage. These latter may be merely reported to supply necessary links of story development in small scenes, which are called *praveśaka* and *viṣkaṁbhaka* in Sanskrit theory.[5]

It is quite possible to examine a drama in the light of this theory. But it is also apparent that while the theory touches the basic concept of drama and the delineation of *rasa-bhāva*, it mainly covers its essential structure and construction. Every drama, whether by a master or a mediocre, is apt to show these essential components of *rasa-bhāva*, the *avasthās* of plot-building and the *artha-prakṛti-s* or the components of dramatic construction. The difference would be in handling some of these elements artistically and convincingly. Though a play may suffer in merit on account of such difference, we are likely to miss real criteria for judging the greatness of a play or a playwright, because our analysis may prove to be only technical. We may, therefore, examine a play from a slightly different angle, using, of course, the elements which the theory includes and implies. These elements which govern the dramatic form are :

(a) the emotional content; plot and plot-construction
(b) dialogue and poetry
(c) characters
(d) emotional impact and life's values : the vision of life

It will be seen that this approach is not contrary to Sanskrit theory; it is implied in it. Only the angle is of our choosing.

[3]

The predecessor of Kālidāsa, Bhāsa, dealt with dramatic themes that exhibited the heroic and the amorous sentiments. Kālidāsa is pre-eminently a poet of *śṛṅgāra* or of love. The heroism or *vīra-rasa* comes in his plays through the portrayal of his heroes. The heroic stature of Agnimitra is a little doubtful because he is not shown or represented in heroic

action. But there cannot be any doubt about the martial qualities of Purūravas and especially of Duṣyanta. Both enjoy the personal friendship of Indra, the king of gods, and are his trusted allies in his wars against demons. Duṣyanta, in addition, exercises his prowess to guard the sacrifices in Kaṇva's hermitage during the absence of the sage. But these are facets only of the heroes' character. Kālidāsa's concentration is on the love-life of his royal heroes. And here we see colours that are as varied as life itself. Love of Agnimitra for Mālavikā may appear to be somewhat flippant, as he has already two wives and a grown up son who can lead an army in a battle. Kālidāsa too shows this love affair in a lighter, delightful vein which, once or twice, strikes a hilarious, farcical note. Nevertheless, it will be difficult to question the sincerity of Agnimitra. It is he, among Kālidāsa's heroes, who says that mutual love, equal loving response, is better than unfulfilled love and death itself.[6] In the other two plays, the love of the hero and the heroine is serious and profound. Urvaśī is a passionate and impetuous woman in love, and Purūravas is swept away by this overwhelming love. If love is all the life for Urvaśī, Purūravas must have realised the moving power of this human emotion at least when Urvaśī disappeared from his sight. His madness at the loss of Urvaśī is a measure of the depth of his love and of the magnitude with which love can affect an individual life. The love of Śakuntalā and Duṣyanta seems to blossom like a bud opening into a full flower and maturing into the fruit of life. It has all the delicacy and fragrance of a flower. But it also exhibits an inner strength that enables the lovers to stand temporary misunderstandings, agonising separation, the terrible pain of estrangement, and experience that large-heartedness which forgets and forgives everything and binds the lovers into a union that goes beyond the physical thrill and happiness.

Kālidāsa shows us the love in union and in separation, the happiness and misery of lovers, and the crowning joy of a child in whom the couple is melted into an inseparable unity. But what is more remarkable in Kālidāsa's dramatic art is that his picture of *rati* in not circumscribed by the love of

passionate men and women. The dramatist understands love in a wider sense and shows its universal sweep in which the entire creation is included. There is parental love, the deep affection of a father for his foster-child. There is the mutual affection of friends which leads a Bakulāvalikā to suffer the wrath of a queen and imprisonment for her friend Mālavikā, or prompts Anasūyā and Priyaṁvadā to safeguard the happiness of Śakuntalā at any cost. There is the devotion of servants to their master and of pupils to their preceptor. The bond of affection extends to the world of nature as well. Śakuntalā is as much a child of nature as she is the daughter of her mother. The trees and creepers are to her brothers and sisters, the young deer her pet children. The trust and affection are mutual; so that just as Śakuntalā would not drink water unless the trees were watered first, and would not pluck their flowers even to decorate herself, and would celebrate the first blossoms of creepers as if it were the birth of a grand child,[7] nature too, in the same way, would not be niggardly in her response of love to Śakuntalā. A young deer would come to her when its mouth is bruised by *darbha* blades like a child coming to its mother, and would drink water only out of her hands. The entire world of nature would be lavish in showering wedding gifts on Śakuntalā, and would arrange her departure to her husband's house with tree-shaded roads, fragrant pools of water at intervals, cool breezes and soft paths.[8] Of the kind of love that exists between man and woman nature has her counterparts : the *cakravāka* birds ; the pairs of swans that recline on the beach of Mālinī river ; the dove-cotes beneath the awnings that warble with the birds' cooings ; and the doe that trustingly scratches her itching left eye on the tip of a black antelope's horn.[9] It is this wider, universal connotation that Kālidāsa gives to the emotion of love that makes his picture of *śṛṅgāra* a delight of art, and, what is more, a vision of life. This is not only a drama of life, it is also the poetry of life.

Bharata[10] recommended the use of several sentiments in a dramatic composition in order to make it interesting to all sections of the audience, and Kālidāsa himself speaks of

nānārasa lokacarita as the approved content of *nāṭya*.[11] It is to be expected that if one particular sentiment like love or heroism were to be treated as the principal emotion, the others would come in shades, in harmony with the dominating emotion. Kālidāsa arranges this in his plays ; and we have along with the heroic such other sentiments as that of pathos, laughter, the marvellous and the furious. What deserves to be remembered in connection with Kālidāsa's treatment of the story and of the *rasa* are the following features :

(a) The judicious sense of balance that Kālidāsa maintains in the depiction of rhetorical sentiments. The sentiment never obscures the main picture or degenerate into sentimentality by the writer's emotionalism and love of rhetoric, a fault of art of which many poets, including Bhavabhūti, are guilty.

(b) Such a balance is possible because Kālidāsa possesses the exceptional quality known as artistic restraint. Just as Kālidāsa is not tempted to depict a *rasa* only for theoretical requirement—as Bhaṭṭa Nārāyaṇa did in the *Veṇīsaṁhāra*, describing a very amorous scene between Duryodhana and Bhānumatī—in the same way he was not tempted to overdo love and pathos, the two sentiments which have a universal appeal. His heroes are frank in their desires and expression ; but they do observe a certain decorum ; so that a love scene, in the drama at least, would not go beyond 'a kiss unkissed' ; sorrow may choke one's throat, blind one's vision, paralyse the activity of senses and load the heart with pain; [12] yet one would not wallow in the flow of tears and outbursts of lamentation ; and swooning would be a sign of the extreme limit of one's endurance. It is such a picture of pathos that really has a profound impact. It makes the fourth act of the *Śākuntala*, for example, an exceptional piece of art, both as poetry and as drama.[13]

(c) Kālidāsa is gay and has a loving merry outlook on life. This makes his humour very delightful. The laughter in Kālidāsa's dramas is due not only to the conventional character of the Vidūṣaka ; it is also due to the ability on

the part of his characters to see the fun and inconsistency in life. That is why, Priyaṁvadā can crack a joke at Śakuntalā's bursting youth ; Mālavikā can poke fun at Agnimitra's show of bravery ; the fisherman can pull the leg of a policeman and give him a scathing repartee ; and an innocent child like Sarvadamana can evoke amused, delightful laughter by telling the unknown Duṣyanta that he is not his father, but Duṣyanta is ! Kālidāsa's *hāsya*, thus widens our understanding of laughter and of life's fun as well.

(d) The marvellous (*adbhuta*) is, in a way, a part of Kālidāsa's two dramatic plots. The stories of Urvaśī and Śakuntalā move between heaven and earth, and celestial and mortal characters join hands in the dramatic action. Here a factor of Kālidāsa's art is the manner in which he handles the supernatural in his otherwise natural stories. In the *Vikramorvasīya* Kālidāsa juxtaposes the two, the characters being given the easy ability to move from earth to heaven or from heaven to earth ; and the supernatural acts in its own way, as in the effect of the curse or the transformation of Urvaśī. In the *Śākuntala*, however, there is a perceivable attempt to turn the supernatural, because a natural interpretation can be put on the working of the supernatuaal. The curse of Durvāsas, for example, is only the adverse fate made dramatically audible ; the voice in Agniśaraṇa is an imaginative way out of an embarrassing situation ; the nature's gifts to Śakuntalā are wedding presents ; Menakā's rescuing Śakuntalā is an act of a mother running out to help her own daughter ; Śanumatī is a dramatic link between Duṣyanta and Śakuntalā and a necessary announcer for audience too ; Duṣyanta travels to the heaven, but the celestial Mātali takes him there and brings him back to the earth.[14] While in the *Vikramorvasīya* Kālidāsa leaves heaven and earth side by side but apart, in the *Śākuntala* he combines heaven and earth, as Goethe rightly perceived. Kālidāsa does not transform earth into heaven, as some Indian critics have wrongly observed. For Kālidāsa the earth is equally 'noble and beautiful', to quote Mātali's words.[15] But this treatment of the supernatural or the marvellous, not as a dramatic device for solving problems of plot-construction or as a spectacular device to thrill and impress

spectators, but as an integral part of the story, bestows on Kālidāsa's plays an artistic quality of a high calibre.

(e) Apart from the use of a variety of emotions and a picture of *nānā-rasas*, each in balanced proportion, we should note another quality of Kālidāsa's art, because it is particularly relevant to dramatic showing. A drama is to be staged and seen. The spectators in receiving emotional impacts one after the other must have breathing time, so to say, so that a transition from one powerful emotional impact to another is bridged by a diversion or a smooth emotion. In terms of plot-building, this amounts to an artistic vision and the skilful placement of dramatic scenes. A dramatist like Shakespeare shows this uncommon skill when he places the Porter's scene immediately after the murder of Duncan by Macbeth. One can admire the fourth act of the *Śākuntala* from this angle of emotional equilibrium. It stands mid-way between the dreadful curse of Durvāsas and the following poignant, tragic scene of Śakuntalā's repudiation. Both are emotionally very disturbing. The moving but delicate pathos, suffused with great love, in the scene of leave-taking which intervenes provides the necessary balance between the two emotional shocks.[16] And this means that Kālidāsa is artist enough to realise the importance of *rasa-bhāva* not only as a principle of literature but also as a principle of emotional equilibrium in stage representation of drama.

[4]

Instead of reviewing Kālidāsa's plot-construction in term of the theory of Sanskrit drama, which is likely to be only technical, we may look at Kālidāsa's dramatic plots from a purely critical angle. The story (*vastu*) in a Sanskrit drama is unfolded as an accomplishment on the part of a hero. Since he is a leader of uncommon qualities his success is also assured. Yet if the story were to lack elements of opposition it would not be true to life. Thus, conflict comes in dramatic action, although it is not treated as an essence of *nāṭya*. And in arranging the development of the theme, and of the

elements of conflict and confrontation a writer's dramatic skill can often be tested.

(a) Kālidāsa's themes are uniformly of love, but as the stories take different colours, the sources of obstruction that hinder the fruition of love vary. In the first play, the opposition is from the previous wives of the hero Agnimitra, and the conflict is a harem conflict. Kālidāsa's treatment is gay. The Vidūṣaka is the *sūtradhāra* of the main schemes. But apart from his efforts, what resolves the conflict finally is a number of coincidences, like the blossoming of the queen's favourite Aśoka by the efforts of Mālavikā ; the timely victory of the prince, which both place the senior queen Dhariṇī in a mood of happy reconciliation ; and as regards the junior queen Irāvatī, she cannot but accept the social fact that a woman is subordinate to her husband.

Vikramorvaśīya and *Śākuntala* are plays of union, separation and reunion ; and in them the marriage of the hero and the heroine does not present a problem. It is the cause of separation and the working towards reunion that demand more attention and skill. In the second play, Kālidāsa has turned inward. The difficulty for the marriage of Urvaśī and Purūravas was that it was, in fact, a marriage between heaven and earth. Kālidāsa solves this difficulty by Urvaśī's blunder and the consequent curse of Bharata : But the blunder is at once psychologically natural and absolutely convincing. Having made Urvaśī's passage to the earth clear, Kālidāsa does not waste much time over harem opposition, and queen Auśīnarī is shown to be quickly reconciled to her fate of sharing her husband with another woman. The cause of separation is again rooted in the psychology of Urvaśī. To her love is an all-engrossing passion, her lover an exclusive personal possession ; so that her mind cannot tolerate even a momentary inattention, however innocent it may be. It is Urvaśī's temper and her overwhelming passion that cause the separation.[17] Kālidāsa brings about the reunion with the aid of the marvellous, suggesting thereby that the celestial world was deeply interested in the prowess of Purūravas, as Indira was equally partial to his favourite protégé Urvaśī; and so, the happiness of the couple was not merely a matter of personal

love but an investment for the security of the world of gods against the demons.

In *Śākuntala*, the union comes about by the sheer power of mutual love, by *gāndharva* marriage. In this play Kālidāsa has placed the cause of separation outside the lovers. On the surface it appears that the cause of separation is the curse of Durvāsas ; and the curse itself is due to Śakuntalā's failure to attend to her duty of receiving and honouring a guest. A deeper analysis of the story, however, would compel our attention to the circumstances, shown by the poet, under which the curse occurred. Duṣyanta had just left for his capital. Any newly married girl would be lost in the thoughts about her husband in such a circumstance and would be oblivious to her own self and to her surroundings. Śakuntalā is neither superhuman nor callous like an unworldly ascetic. That is why, the curse is only a symbol of the adverse destiny of Śakuntalā—the causes of which go back to her previous life.[18] Duṣyanta is completely innocent ; he is involved in the curse because he is wedded to Śakuntalā and to her fate. We must further remember that the curse alone could not have caused the separation. The ring of recognition was there to counteract the effect of the curse. The loss of the ring, again a tragic error on the part of Śakuntalā only, Duṣyanta having no part in it, seems to be the crowning cause leading to separation. This is nothing but adverse fate, dogging the footsteps of Śakuntalā, and involving Duṣyanta also as her life's partner. And this makes the scene of repudiation a scene of unusual tension and of a unique conflict. Here *two truths* are opposed.[19] The way to reunion is paved with misery and suffering. Once again, Kālidāsa seems to suggest that divinities and the parents of the gods were interested in the happiness of this couple. If Sānumatī's word are to be trusted, the gods would not permit for long an estrangement of such deep and pure love ; and so the loving couple is united and blessed. Kālidāsa seems to hold out such hope for undying love.

(b) In the course of his plot-development, Kālidāsa has given us some marvellous scenes which are remarkable for their amusing interest, tender emotion, the beauty of their

poetry or the thrill of the inherent drama. Consider, for instance, the scene of the quarrel between the two dance masters, the *Aśoka dohada* scene, the episode at Samudragṛha in the *Mālavikāgnimitra* ; the thrilling opening scene in the *Vikramorvaśīya* and the tender poetic scene of the search for Urvaśī; in the *Śākuntala* the *bhramara* scene, the fisherman's scene, the scene of the recognition of Sarvadamana, and the most impressive fourth and fifth acts. An artist who was both a poet and a dramatist to his core could alone have penned them.

(c) Kālidāsa, to my mind, is a conscious artist. One aspect of his conscious art is his literary and stage experiments, although in the latter he need not be compared to Bhāsa. In my opinion, Kālidāsa attempted in the *Mālavikāgnimitra* to create a lighter 'comedy of manners', a type which is today familiar to us from the plays of Moliere, Oscar Wilde, Bernard Shaw and others. This type is based on sophisticated fun ; but it demands a farcical or light-hearted treatment of all characters, including that of the hero. Kālidāsa did not succeed in this experiment, because the social and literary canons would not permit a caricature of a royal hero. The result, of course, was absurd. Agnimitra, in spite of his royal dignity, is not a man of action and a hero in the acceptable sense of the term; and the Vidūṣaka Gautama, who is by convention a low character, cannot be taken as the hero, although it is his efforts that really win Mālavikā for Agnimitra.[20] But failure apart, the experimenting has an art value, which may not be denied.

Kālidāsa's placing the curse incident 'behind the curtain' (*nepathye*) I regard as a stroke of conscious art. With the sense of drama that Kālidāsa undoubtedly has, he could not have missed the thrill and shocking effect of a visual presentation of an angry sage on the stage and the pronouncement of a terrible curse by him. Yet Kālidāsa consciously avoided it. For, the curse was not a material happening; it was a symbol of fate; we see only its results. As such the stab of fate must come from the back ! In harmony with this art-concept, Kālidāsa presented to the audience only a voice without body. And its effect is nonetheless shocking, once we realise the subtle art of Kālidāsa.

Another experiment still of Kālidāsa is his presentation of the mad grief of Purūravas. We must remember that here only one actor is present in the main scene and he has to speak alone for the greater part of the act. Besides, there is an unavoidable element of repetition in the inquiry of Purūravas about the lost Urvaśī; and repetition is bound to be tiresome both to the actor and to the audience. There is a third factor : Pathos stretched to an enormous length would bore and disgust in stage presentation, and the appeal of the moving emotion would be completely lost. On this background, Kālidāsa's experiment in constructing this scene can be better appreciated. He shows Purūravas as an *unmatta* lover; his madness takes care of his repetitious inquiry and search. Secondly, Kālidāsa has written this scene as a poetic piece and the poetry relieves its monotony. Thirdly, the whole scene is to be play-acted as a *ballet*, a song and dance, scene, as Kālidāsa's choreography of this act clearly shows. The scene thus turns out to be a spectacle of dance and music; and the music and poetry carry the theme of pathos.[21] I regard this as a fine stage experiment.

(d) Another sign of Kālidāsa's conscious art is to be discovered in his continual search for improvement of dramatic technique. It will be seen that Kālidāsa makes a conscious effort to avoid the mistakes he made in his earlier writing. In *Mālavikāgnimitra*, a minor character like the Vidūṣaka dominated the action of the play; and this resulted in the hero being passive, unconvincing and utterly 'unheroic'. In his second play, Kālidāsa made the Vidūṣaka a blundering fool and used his mistake for furthering the action of the play. In the *Śākuntala*, the significant development of the dramatic plot occurs (act V) actually due to the *absence* of the Vidūṣaka; and the skilful way the Vidūṣaka is removed from the scene of action is worthy of critical attention.

In a polygamous society the love affair of a hero was bound to be very embarrassing. We see the ridiculous situations in which Agnimitra is placed in the presence of his younger queen, the shame and humiliation to which he is subjected, and the lies he has to utter in self-defense. Kālidāsa curtails such harem scenes in his second play and does not give much

scope for harem intrique and obstruction. In the *Śākuntala* he mentions the two queens of Duṣyanta; but Haṁsapadikā remains 'behind the curtain'; and the stage appearance of Vasumatī is cleverly withheld, so that no wife of Duṣyanta appears on the stage except Śakuntalā. Kālidāsa could not avoid a polygamous hero; but art demanded that the previous wives did not appear on the stage in order to eliminate compromising and humiliating situations for the hero. Kālidāsa learnt his lesson and consciously worked towards an improved technique.

[5]

I think I suggested earlier that the Sanskrit dramatic theory tended to turn characters into approved types and as vehicles for certain emotional experiences. This is generally true of much of the ancient literature of the world. Aristotle's theory of tragedy too revolves round the concept of a typical hero. From a modern point of view we miss the sharp individuality, if not the variety, of human beings. The dramatic characters of Kālidāsa afford a pleasing exception, at least to some extent, and this is a refreshing features of Kālidāsa's art. Kālidāsa's heroes are more or less the same in their stated qualities. But there is a difference also. All have a fine sense of beauty in life and nature ; it is more pronounced in the case of Duṣyanta who can philosophise over it ; in the case of Purūravas, beauty is a passion which manifests itself without the context of time or reason.[22] Agnimitra's love is sincere, but remains at the level of supreme pleasure. For Purūravas love is a mad passion that can sweep one off one's feet. Duṣyanta has become introspective ; love is not merely a 'mango-blossom' to be kissed for its honey ; it is a deep, abiding pleasure of company, a mature companionship, a full-grown 'lotus', whose nearness alone is a source of profound happiness.[23] Kālidāsa's heroines share the virtues of Indian womanhood. But Mālavikā, though shy, can be bold also in the presence of her lover and give him a joking taunt. Urvaśī is made of different stuff ; but her celestial status and unbounded passion

have not deprived her completely of the instincts of a mother. Śakuntalā is the flower of Kālidāsa's creation. She grows before our eyes. From a young girl struggling to find out what love is, through a maiden in love, a married woman, a rejected and humiliated wife, a lonely suffering soul, to the mother of a child and as large-hearted as mother earth to forgive her husband, Śakuntalā passes through life as an embodiment of a total woman.

It is, however, in the portrayal of minor characters that Sanskrit dramatists can have some scope and which most of them generally neglect to use. Kālidāsa's skill in portraying and understanding human beings can be really seen in his minor characterization. His utterly human Kaṇva, the delightful fisherman, the erudite Purohita (of Duṣyanta), Citralekhā, the friend of Urvaśī, these are characters we are not likely to forget. We must also remember that nature is one of the living characters, actively taking part in the dramatic story, particularly in the *Śākuntala*.[24]

Kālidāsa loves to create pairs of characters and contrast them sharply, so that their individuality becomes etched. Consider, for example, the sensitive, emotional and easily provoked old Gaṇadāsa and the younger but calm Haradatta ; the utterly devoted Bakulāvalikā and the selfish flatterer Nipuṇikā ; the dignified Dhāriṇī and the passionate, young, irascible Irāvatī ; the *gurusama guruśiṣya* Śārṅgarava who roars like a lion or like a twanging bow and the solemn philosophical Śāradvata; the loving but naughty Priyaṁvadā and the deep, sobre Anasūyā. In such pictures as these Kālidāsa shows us the amazing variety of human beings, and also individual peculiarities that make each of them full of life. It is really fortunate that Kālidāsa did not lose this perspective on life though he worked within an accepted framework of art.

[6]

Kālidāsa's dialogue is not merely a means of carrying the story forward. It has the charm, the simplicity, the realism and force of spoken language. His verses realistically or

imaginatively describe a thing, express an important idea or principle, and embody an emotion. Rarely does he use his prose or verses to display his rhetorical skill or metrical command. This is a feature which the ancient Sanskrit dramatists like Bhāsa, Kālidāsa and Sūdraka share. The dialogue in Sanskrit drama is always written in a mixture of prose and verse. And when we see the literary trends that came into vogue at a later period, and particularly in the declining period of Sanskrit drama, we can not but appreciate and enjoy the charm, sweetness and perspicuity of the dramatic style of these earlier masters. In the later period, the dramatic prose came to be a long-winded essay-like discussion, the different paragraphs precariously held together by the weak phrase *tatas tataḥ* ('what next' ?), the diction loaded with compounds and rhetorical devices, and the verses, disproportionately preponderating over the prose in total length and used as occasions for displaying mastery of metrical construction and craft of rhetorical flourish. The Sanskrit language seemed to lose its spoken character and acquire the colour of a cultivated, literary speech. What is more, it seemed to lose connection with the character actually using it; so that even delicate women characters were given speeches full of jaw-breaking sounds and compounds of great length. We know that even Bhavabhūti could not avoid such an anamoly. It is, therefore, very refreshing to find Kālidāsa keeping his dramatic dialogue close to life and its reality. Some of the fine scenes to which a reference was made earlier are instances also of fine dramatic dialogue, living and lively, crisp and real. The verses of Kālidāsa, on the other hand, are remarkable for their controlled poetic charm, and some of them, like the four verses in the fourth act of the *Śākuntala*, have passed into the region of immortality.

Another noteworthy feature of Kālidāsa's dialogue-writing is his ability to use a dramatic speech to create a character and reflect the character's individuality. Most of the speeches in Kālidāsa's plays are consistent with the status, training, culture and nature of the characters using them. Kālidāsa's characters do not speak as if they were mere mouth-pieces of their creator-author. A typical illustration

of my point is the short speech of a paragraph assigned to Duṣyanta's Purohita in the *Śākuntala*, act V. His language, diction and sentence-construction are of a Śāstrin who has spent his life-time in the study of *Śāstras*, so that the scientific jargon has permeated his ordinary, everyday speech as well. What a character, and what a beautiful perspective on characterization !

[7]

Thus, a well-conceived theme, logically and artistically executed dramatic design, engagingly distinguished characterization, dramatic style worthy of high poetry and drama and yet refreshingly simple and alive, and an emotional impact which is controlled and balanced and which is very effective : these are the features of Kālidāsa's art. They are also the features of great art. And they explain the unique position that Kālidāsa holds in the world of Sanskrit letters.

Yet we may perhaps miss a vital point which is related to the mind of an artist, and which informs and moulds his art-efforts. In the language of Western literary criticism it is called the 'author's philosophy of life', his vision and outlook on life, the values he cherishes and upholds. In the process of appraising them we may discover a quality of art and a measure of an artist's greatness.

We realise that Kālidāsa had a cheerful outlook on life in spite of the sorrow and pain rooted in life. He also loved the calm tranquillity in life and nature, the charm and beauty of the entire creation, and avoided the rough, the fierce and the awesome in life and nature.[25] This may have limited his vision; but it did not affect the depth of his understanding of life.

One of the values that Kālidāsa cherished most is love in life and nature. In his *Kumārasaṁbhava* there is an underlying philosophy of love. Love is a mighty, universal force that illumines an entire life and gives it uncommon strength, purpose, and devotion. A delicate, most beautiful girl like Parvatī, the daughter of the richest being in the universe, Himalaya, is prepared to forgo the splendour and luxury of her parental home to win the love of an ascetic who usually inhabits cemetery grounds. She is ready to perform a

penance that would put to shame the die-hards of ascetics. But with all this self-inflicted torture and pain she wins the ecstatic happiness of married life. The desolate Rati preserves and guards the dead ashes of her Madana, hoping to be united with him again. Love is an animating force of life that gives strength to suffer, a vitality to endure estrangement and misunderstanding, and turns simple life into a heaven of bliss.[26] It is this theme that Kālidāsa demonstrates in his dramatic writing, particularly in the *Śākuntala*.

But while tackling the theme of love in his dramas, problems of social and artistic origin must have confronted Kālidāsa. In order to be realistic and true to life that surrounded him Kālidāsa had to accept polygamous society, His royal heroes are polygamous. Such a state of society is characterised by the domination of the male. Social practice and religious law (*dharma*) permitted the male a freedom in love-relations which was denied to a woman. A woman had to accept the man who was her husband and give him complete loyalty, love and devotion through her entire life. She was required to serve elders, behave friendly towards her rival-wives, and never by action or word go against the wishes of her husband.[27] At best she could be an ideal housewife, a counsellor to her husband, his companion and, in some cases, his beloved pupil.[28] But her secondary role remained unaltered. Such a social position was a mockery of true love, where the partners in love must be on a footing of absolute equality. Neither the canons of social life nor the precepts of religious law created such a status of equality between man and woman in the polygamous society. It was necessary, therefore, for art to step forward and render at least poetic justice to the wronged woman. This is precisely what our Sanskrit dramatists do in their plays of union and reunion. Bhāsa set the tone in his *Svapnavāsavadatta*, where the knowledge of Udayana's sincere and abiding love is brought directly to the separated Vāsavadattā. This is tacitly done in the *Vikramorvaśiya*, because Urvaśī, though transformed into a creeper, has retained the power of her senses and has witnessed the suffering and misery of Purūravas, which are a proof of his

integrity and sincerity of love. The dramatic design of the *Śākuntala* did not permit such direct witness of Duṣyanta's love, and Śakuntalā had to be content with the eye-witness report given by Sānumatī. Yet, there is something very touching, and absolutely human in Duṣyanta bending at the feet of Śakuntalā, apologising to her for his fault of forgetfulness for which he was not really responsible, and tenderly wiping the tear in Śakuntalā's eye.[29] In a male-dominated polygamous society such a picture is inconceivable. But it is the sincerity and integrity of the male only that demands proof and demonstration. When art makes it possible, it is not only a satisfaction to the woman but also a gratification and assurance to humanity.

But, to my mind, Kālidāsa does something more. He holds Duṣyanta to ransom and makes him defend his love for Śakuntalā and his act of refusing to accept her as his wife. The first attack comes from his confidential companion, the Vidūṣaka, who questions the sincerity and seriousness of Duṣyanta's fascination for a hermit's daughter, the morality of his attraction for, apparently, a Brahmin girl, and dubs Duṣyanta's passion as a ridiculous fancy, unworthy of a sovereign monarch. The scene of confrontation in the second act is worthy of careful analysis. Duṣyanta's replies to the charges made by the Vidūṣaka clearly show that his fascination for Śakuntalā is not a passing fancy but a very deep emotion. Duṣyanta has also considered the moral aspect of the affair and knows that he would not be acting against the religious law in marrying this girl. Above all, Śakuntalā's extraordinary beauty is to be seen to be believed; and Duṣyanta's intentions are absolutely honourable because he wishes to take the girl as his wedded wife and make her his queen. In the second confrontation, Duṣyanta is prepared to step down from his position of a judge, a position which the existing social and religious law had bestowed on the ruling monarch. He asks Śārṅgarava to judge the issue and direct him towards a just and correct course of action. This is really a very unique position where the hero, supposed to be the social, political and moral leader of society, is put in a defensive position and asked to defend his feelings and actions. If Bhavabhūti

painted a similar picture of Rāma in his *Uttara-rāma-carita*, where his love and royal authority were seriously challenged, one can clearly see that Bhavabhūti was influenced by Kālidāsa's art and was emulating it. Kālidāsa's picture of the hero, therefore, is the first attempt of art to probe the mainspring of man's feelings and actions. In doing this, the dramatist renders further justice to the victimised woman, and also sets through art some high moral values for life. This unique aspect of Kālidāsa's art places him among the real great artists of all times.

References

1. Vide Goethe's off-quoted praise.
2. Cf. *Bharata-Nāṭyaśāstra*, (*NS*) GOS ed. Vol. I, I. 119 :
   योऽयं स्वभावो लोकस्य सुखदःखसमन्वितः ।
   सोऽङ्गाद्यभिनयोपेतो नाटयमित्यमिधीयते ॥
3. Cf. *NS*. GOS. XIX. 1-5.
4. *Ibid*. *NS*. XIX. 7-29; 37-55.
5. *Ibid*. *NS*. XIX. 110-116.
6. Cf. *Mālavikāgnimitra* III. 15 :
   अनातुरोत्कण्ठतयोः प्रसिध्यता
   समागमेनापि रतिर्न मां प्रति ।
   परस्परप्राप्तिनिराशयोर्वरं
   शरीरनाशोऽपि समानुरागयोः ॥
7. Cf. *Śākuntala* IV. 9.
8. Cf. *Śākuntala* IV. 5, 10, 11
9. *Ibid*. VI. 17.
10. Cf. *NS*. GOS. VII. 119 ff and 120 :
    न हि अेकरसजं काव्यं किञ्चिदस्ति प्रयोगतः ।.............
    नानाभावार्थसंपन्नाः स्थायिसत्वाभिचारिणः ।
    पुष्पावकीर्णाः कर्तव्याः काव्येषु हि रसा बुधैः ॥
11. Cf. *Mālavikāgnimitra* I. 4c
12. Cf. *Śākuntala* IV. 6, describing the condition of Kaṇva at the thought of Śakuntalā's departure.
13. See the article, "Traditional Judgement on the *Śākuntala*".
14. For full treatment see article "Kālidāsa's Treatment of the Supernatural".

15. Cf. *Śākuntala*, VII. 8. 1 :
    मातलिः-(सबहुमानमालोक्य) अहो अुदारमणीया पृथिवी ।
16. See "Traditional Judgement on the Śākuntala" referred to in Note No. (13).
17. Cf, her friend's observation in the Interlude to act IV :
    असहना खलुसा । दूरारूढश्चास्य: प्रणय: ।
18. See, "The Curse of Durvāsas".
19. See, "The Repudiation of Śakuntalā and Duṣyanta's Dilemma".
20. See, " Kālidāsa's First Play".
21. For detailed treatment see "The unusual Character of Act IV in the *Vikramorvaśīya*".
22. See, *Appointment with Kālidāsa*, L.D. Institute of Indology, Ahmedabad, 1982.
23. See, *Śākuntala* V. 1, and "The Song Haṁsapadikā".
24. See, *Appointment with Kālidāsa*, pp. 54-56.
25. *Ibid.*, pp. 57-59.
26. *Ibid.*, Ch. 5.
27. Cf. *Śākuntala*. IV. 18.
28. Cf. *Raghuvaṁśa* VIII. 67.
29. Cf. *Śākuntala* VII. 24, 25.

15

THE DETRACTORS OF BHAVABHŪTI

Bhavabhūti uses a particular expression[1] to refer to his depreciators without indicating them.[2] Who these depreciators or detractors were, or could be, remains a question awaiting a clear solution.

Sanskrit scholars have generally attributed Bhavabhūti's remarks to literary critics who ran down his first play, the *Mahāvīracarita* (*MVC*). This play is supposed to have been a failure. For one, it lacks dramatic qualities ; another, it is not even a dramatic poem but rather an essay in dialogue. It, therefore, evoked strong criticism naturally. It hurt the sensitive poet deeply. So, in his second play, *Mālatīmādhava* (*MM*) he replied to his critics with veiled bitterness, and took consolation in the faith that the boundless earth and endless time would produce a true appreciator of his poetic merit.[3] Apparently, the adverse criticism did not abate. But Bhavabhūti had matured and grown sober. In his last play, the *Uttararāmacarita* (*URC*), he seems to have realised how people are ever malicious in regard to the character of women and the literary merit of speech ; with philosophic resignation, therefore, he advises to ignore the criticism and stick firmly to one's obligation.[4]

The identity of the adverse critics of Bhavabhūti is, of course, not known. Prof. G.C. Jhālā has suggested recently that they are Bāṇabhaṭṭa's son and the admirers of Bāṇa.[5] Jhālā states that in the century preceding Bhavabhūti's time, Bāṇa was a great literary force. The characteristically ornate and florid style of Bāṇa and his prose romances had captured the fancy of learned readers. The patronage of Emperor

Harṣa (of Sthāṇeśvara, Kanauj) had added prestige to the literary fame of Bāṇa. When Bhavabhūti entered the literary field the influence of Bāṇa had not dwindled. And Bāṇa's son, who must have been an elderly contemporary of Bhavabhūti and who completed Bāṇa's *Kādambarī*, stood as a champion of his father's literary mode and fame. Now, the *Mālatīmādhava*, according to Jhālā, shows some close resemblance to Bāṇa's *Kādambarī* in the treatment of its erotic theme. So, Bāṇa's son and admirers attacked Bhavabhūti for his emulation of Bāṇa's prose style and his handling of the love story. Bhavabhūti is replying, says Jhālā, to these detractors in the verse '*ye nāma kecid iha naḥ*...

Prof. Jhālā's suggestion has at least one merit in that it refers the poet's remark in the prologue to the play itself. For, the earlier interpretation, based on the supposed failure of an *earlier* play, is against the accepted convention and tradition of Sanskrit dramatic writing. In the prologues of their plays the Sanskrit dramatists refer to that play itself, and whatever they say from a literary angle in the prologue is relevant only to the play to which the prologue is attached. The practice of replying to critics of one's earlier works and referring to literary controversies is modern ; it is unknown to Sanskrit dramatists. They write the prologue to introduce themselves and their play : and some take the opportunity to sing their own praises and boost their drama. Therefore, any reference to Bhavabhūti's early failure in his prologue to the next play is out of context in the tradition of Sanskrit drama.

As a matter of fact, reply to any *literary* charges or adverse criticism in the prologue of a Sanskrit drama is only a surmise; but it cannot be reasonably supported in the world of Sanskrit literary writing. The connection that Jhālā assumes between Bāṇa's literary style and Bhavabhūti's emulation of it is rather remote, separated as they are by a century. What can be reasonably assumed is that the heavy, ornate prose style used by Subandhu and Bāṇa may have impressed writers of the succeeding generations ; and Bhavabhūti, with his erudite equipment and training, may have been the first to apply this ornamental kāvya style to

dramatic writing as well. To assume that Bhavabhūti's emulation of Bāṇa's style and his treatment of *śṛṅgāra* angered Bāṇa's son and other admirers, one must presume the Bhavabhūti's two plays reached the established literary circle almost immediately, and so the literay men reacted against each other within a short interval of time. This could not have been possible in ancient days.

Besides, why should Bāṇa's son resent the emulation of his father by later writers or by Bhavahbūti, unless they or Bhavabhūti, had claimed originality for the style and treatment and denied Bāṇa's founder-position ? Bhavabhūti is egotistical and praises his own literary ability, no doubt. But he is not known to have decried Bāṇa or any of his predecessors. On the contrary, if Bāṇa had emulators, the fact would enhance the glory of Bāṇa ; and his son and admirers should have been happy really, in stead of feeling any resentment against the emulator.

On other grounds too, any assumption of unfavourable literary criticism on Bhavabhūti's (first or second) play will have to be rejected. The political and social conditions were favourable to literary activity.[6] King Yaśovarman of Kanauj, whose patronage Bhavabhūti later obtained, was himself partial to poetic and dramatic writing. Some of his miniature verses appear in Sanskrit Anthologies. He is the author of a play, *Rāmābhyudaya*, now lost.[7] His court poet Vākpatirāja had composed a Prakrit poem, *Gauḍavaho*, which is remarkable for its mellifluous style and its pictures of village life. Vākpatirāja is known to have composed another Prakrit poem, *Madhumathanavijaya*. His stray verses seem to have found a place, at a later stage, in the *Gāthāsaptaśati*. There must have been other literary works produced during this period of time, although they are no longer extant.

Bhavabhūti came to Yaśovarman rather late in his life. But Kalhaṇa tells us that he was an honoured poet of the king's court. Vākpatirāja has paid a very handsome tribute to this senior contemporary; and it leaves no doubt about Bhavabhūti's poetic ability and renown.[8] Later writers have offered Bhavabhūti bouquets of praise, and tradition regards him as second only to Kālidāsa. Even

before Bhavabhūti secured royal patronage his plays were produced at the festival of Kālapriyanātha by a troupe of actors. Bhavabhūti was on friendly terms with these actors. Thus, Bhavabhūti was favoured both by the actors and the audience.

If there were any point in the supposed critical attack on Bhavabhūti, it could be neither on account of the failure of his first play nor due to his supposed emulation of Bāṇa. It may have some connection, perhaps, with literary trends. The dramatists that preceded Bhavabhūti—Bhāsa, Kālidāsa, Śūdraka, Śrī Harṣa—wrote their plays using simple diction in their dialogues, resembling as far as possible the spoken Sanskrit. They chose varied themes with a variety of emotions, but the emotion of love was treated with a preference. In spite of serious events and colours the drama, in their hands, continued to be poetically elegant and at the same time a delightful entertainment satisfying diverse public taste. Bhavabhūti, in contrast, was, both by temperament and by training, a serious-minded intellectual. The ornamental prose style used by Daṇḍin, Subandhu and Bāṇa in their stories of love and adventure must have fascinated him intellectually, and he used it for dialogue-writing in his dramas. He used themes of love but could not avoid serious tone and the desire for philosophising. Gay and light atmosphere is removed from Bhavabhūti's plays. Bhavabhūti also attempted some experiments, like presenting the Rāma story, once as an example of *Vīra* and *Adbhuta rasa*, and then, as that of overwhelming *Karuṇa*. All this was a new trend and it was bound to take time to be appreciated. It may have evoked some criticism.

Yet I do not think this also could have been the cause of Bhavabhūti's emotional hurt. The literary circumstances sketched above do not suggest that Bhavabhūti lacked appreciative response for a long time.

Jagaddhara[9] suggests that three kinds of men seem to have been in the poet's view when he wrote this verse ; ignorant men; those who cared only for the *advaitic* philosophy; and those who are connoisseurs of poetic art. The first two kinds are likely to denounce a poet : the *ajña*, because they know

very little of art ; the philosophers, because they regard *Brahman* as the only truth and deride material pleasures. *Te kim api jānanti* means, in the case of *ajña*, that they know nothing or very little about art; in the case of the *advaita-mata-magna-mānasa* people the phrase means that they know *Brahman* only, and are incapable of understanding literary art. The poet, therefore, says that his literary composition is not meant for them ; one does not sing for the deaf ; nor does one weave a tawny robe for an emperor.

Jagaddhara's explanation touches only the well-known platitudes in the field of art. Ignorant men and those who are bent only on securing spiritual salvation cannot ever be expected to turn to literary art or drama. If this were what Bhavabhūti had in mind, his utterance would lose all sting ; it would be a trite observation. People of these types would criticise and attack *all* poetry and dramas, not choose the work of a single poet like Bhavabhūti for their criticism. Moreover, it would be inconsistent with *prarocanā* (appeal and recommendation to the audience), which is by theory, a worthy part of a dramatist's prologue.

The word *avajñā* is too strong an expression for a mere adverse literary criticism. And Bhavabhūti turns to the same idea covertly by using the phrase *vacanīyatā* at *URC*. 1.5, which has no literary background and which, as it stands, is out of place in the prologue of this play. The reason for Bhavabhūti's outburst must, therefore, be sought elsewhere. The hurt is personal. And, to my mind, it is to be found in the poet's personal background.

The personal and family history of Bhavabhūti reveals that he belonged to a learned priestly family of Brahmins who were placed in the front rank of the community and who had the family right to claim the *soma* drink in a ritual sacrifice. Bhavabhūti was fully trained in the Śāstric lore under a most competent guru, Jñānanidhi (Treasure-house of knowledge), and was brought up in the family traditions of ritual piety and Śāstric erudition.[10]

What else could be expected from a young man with such a family background and training except that he would carry

forward the ritual, erudite, Śāstric traditions of the family and bring greater honour to it ? But alas ! Bhavabhūti chose to follow a literary career contrary to expectations. The urge for creative writing so dominated his mind, his thinking and sensitivity, that he turned his back on Śāstric pursuits and followed the path of poetry. This in itself was a step for resentment in a family imbued with Śāstric traditions. Bhavabhūti went further. He felt that the study of the Vedas, the knowledge of Upaniṣads, of philosophical systems like Sāṁkhya and Yoga were all valueless for the literary and theatre art of drama.[11] He studied the art of literature and drama, and even formed a natural friendship with professional actors,[12] who, we know, produced all his plays at the festival of Kālapriyanātha.

This was a break from the family which, in those ancient days, could not have been tolerated. Leaving the venerable career of a Shastrin, a pundit, and choosing the doubtful career of a verse-or drama-writer was in itself 'bad'. But the 'worse' was Bhavabhūti's association with theatre people and friendship with professional actors. The actors as a class were accorded a low status in ancient Indian society. The *nāṭyaśāstra* gives a story of a curse pronounced on the head of Bharatas, as a result of which they became Śūdras, low and condemned unfit to be admitted to share a meal with respectable classes and living only on the pleasure of society.[13]

The story tells us that the curse was revoked from the next generation of actors in the interest of preserving and perpetuating theatre-art (*nāṭya*). But the social attitude to actors did not appear to have changed much. When Rāma desired to go alone to the forest, Sītā, hurt and angry, accuses him of behaving like a professional actor who does not mind handing over his wife to others.[14] And a feeling has persisted among the Hindus that it is inauspicious to look at the face of an actor in everyday surroundings, because they are low and have no morals. During the ages the social attitude to artists and other professional people has somewhat softened, but not completely changed, even today. A young man breaking away from established family traditions and

choosing an unorthodox career is not exactly loved by the family. How strong and uncompromising must have been the attitude of society, in Bhavabhūti's days, towards renegades from family prestige !

I think, therefore, that the people who criticised Bhavabhūti, who made it their business to speak ill about him, were his own family, relatives and friends, and residents of his native place. Most of them were well-versed in Śāstras, but did not care for the creative urge of art (*jānanti te kim api*). They were angered by Bhavabhūti's break from the prestigious traditions of the family. They would have desired Bhavabhūti to write learned, śāstra-works, not waste his life in writing drama and poetry. Probably they never forgave Bhavabhūti for his persistence in sticking to the literary career without returning to the family fold. To a sensitive, highly emotional man like Bhavabhūti this attitude of his own people must have been a terrible shock inflicting the deepest hurt. That is why he gives vent to this personal feeling, although it is completely out of context in his dramatic prologues. The memory of bitter opposition from *his own people* must have lingered with Bhavabhūti even when he came to write his own masterpiece, the *Uttararāmacarita*. For, while the outside world recognised his great ability, his own people disowned him, as circumstantial evidence in his life indicates. However, Bhavabhūti's confidence about finding a kindred soul has been justified. His contemporary Vākpatirāja held him in very high esteem, as did the writers of succeeding generations. And Citsukhācārya mentions the *Mālatīmādhava* as coming from an *āpta* (a person of authority), adding that Bhavabhūti's established authoritative position does not suffer at all merely on account of his writing literary works and dramas.[15]

This analysis, I hope, will explain the sensitive personal reaction of Bhavabhūti expressed in the verse. It will also explain why Bhavabhūti left his native Padmapura, wandered over to Padmāvatī, Kālpī, and then to Kanauj, where he probably settled down under the patronage of king Yaśovarman.[16]

References

1. Cf. the phrase वान्तोयुक्तिः, in Sūtradhāra's speech, *Mālatīmādhava* (*MM*), prologue. Jagaddhara paraphrases it by वचोभङ्गिः.
2. *MM*. I. 6. ab : ये नाम केचिदिह नः प्रथयन्त्यवज्ञाम्
   : जानन्ति ते किमपि तान् प्रति नैष यत्नः ।
3. *MM*. I. 6. cd : उत्पस्यतेऽस्ति मम (v. l. मम तु) कोऽपि समानधर्मा
   : कालो ह्ययं निरवधिर्विपुला च पृथ्वी ॥
4. *URC*. I. 5 : सर्वथा व्यवहर्तव्यं कुतो ह्यवचनीयता ।
   : यथा स्त्रीणां तथा वाचां साधुत्वे दुर्जनो जनः ॥
5. G.C. Jhala : "Bhavabhūti and his contemporary detractors", *Journal of the Oriental Institute*, Baroda, Vol. XIV, nos. 3-4, March-June 1965; pp. 448-463.
6. For a detailed picture, see Mirashi's *Bhavabhūti*. Motilal Banarassidas, 1974.
7. See, Raghavan, *Some Old Lost Rāma Plays*, Annamalai University, 1961.
8. *Gauḍavaho*, verse 799 :

   भवभूइजलहिणिग्गदकव्वामयरसकणा इव फुरंति ।
   जस्स विसेसा अज्जवि वियडेसु कहाणिवेसेसु ॥
9. See Jagadhhara's Commentary on *MM*. I. 6.
10. Cf. the prologues of Bhavabhūti's plays; particularly t he following :
    (i) तत्र (विदर्भेषु पद्मनगरे) केचित् तैत्तिरीयिणः काश्यपाः चरणगुरवः पङ्क्तिपावनाः पञ्चाग्नयः धृतव्रताः सोमपीथिनः उदुम्बरनामानः ब्रह्मवादिनः प्रतिवसन्ति । तदामुष्यायणस्य ... पवित्रकीर्तेः नीलकण्ठस्य भट्टश्रीकण्ठपदलाञ्छनः भवभूतिनामा जातुकर्णीपुत्रः..... *MM*.
    (ii) *MVC*., I.5. : श्रेष्ठः परमहंसानां महर्षीणामिवाङ्गिराः ।
    यथार्थनामा भगवान् यस्य ज्ञाननिधिर्गुरुः ॥
11. Cf. *MM*. I.7 ab : यद्वेदाध्ययनं तथोपनिषदां सांख्यस्य योगस्य च
    ज्ञानं तत्कथनेन किं न हि ततः कश्चिद् गुणो नाटके ।
12. Cf. the prologues : भवभूतिनामा कविः निसर्गसौहृदेन भरतेषु
    स्वकृतिम्...अस्माकमर्पितवान् । *MM*.

13. See *NS* GOS. Vol. IV; Ch. 36, vv. 38-40. Read :

निर्व्रताश्च (निराहुता) विना होमैः शूद्राचारा भविष्यथ ॥
अपाङ्क्तयाः कुत्सिताश्चावमा एव भविष्यथ ।
परोपस्थानवन्तश्च शस्त्रपण्योपजीविनः ॥

14. 'शैलूष इव मां राम परेभ्यो दातुमिच्छसि ।' *Rāmāyaṇa*. II. 27. 8

15. *Tattvapradīpikā* (Nirṇayasāgara ed. p. 265):

'...आप्तोदीरितवाक्येषु मालतीमाधवादिषु ।
व्यभिचारान्न तद्युक्तमाप्तत्वस्यानिरुक्ततः ॥
...... न हि पुरा आप्त एव सन् नाटकनाटिकादिप्रबन्ध-
विरचनमात्रेण अनाप्तो भवति भवभूतिः ।......'

16. See my *Bhavabhūti* (Men of Indian Letters Series). Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi, 1979.

16

BHAVABHŪTI'S LITERARY VENTURES AND THEIR URGES

[1]

The rather interminate title is meant to suggest the possible traits of Bhavabhūti's character, personality and circumstances which must have moulded his literary preferences and shaped the form and expression of his writing. In studying the works of a writer the questions that often strike us are : What makes some one turn to literary art ? What urges a potential writer to essay literary ventures ? The obvious answer is the charm the Poetic Muse exercises over one's mind. But that in itself would not make one a writer. The creative urge must come from the instinctive quality or faculty, the innate ability to write, to produce a work of art: The quality which Sanskrit theorists describe by the world *pratibhā*, and which is generally supposed to be inborn or a divine gift. A person may be able to write if he gets the necessary help or if he has received training or education; but without *pratibhā* he will not be a literary artist whose works will survive the passage of time and continue to be a source of beauty and delight even for generations to come.

We must suppose that Bhavabhūti had this gift of *pratibhā*, as Kālidāsa and other artists of great calibre did have. But we have to go beyond the basic requisite of literary art and examine, if possible, a writer's views on art, his literary approach and the environmental influences, if any, which may have prompted and shaped his literary ventures.

Bhavabhūti is one Sanskrit poet who holds distinctive opinions about *vāc*, speech or words and sense, which are the medium of literary art through which a poet expresses himself and communicates with his readers. On the level of routine living speech is the foundation of human life and of human behaviour. Speech is often the reflex of man's activity and certainly an indication of human intentions. Bhavabhūti thinks that merits and demerits, not only from the religious angle but from the angle of human relations also, flow from the words men use and are a symptom of their character.[1] Culture and education bestow fine flavour, an elegance, on one's words and it is always a pleasure to listen to polished speech.[2] The words of righteous men are naturally weighed with goodness and sweet modesty; when they speak the words seem to drip with honey.[3] On the other hand, harsh words are demonaic; it is a speech prompted by pride, madness and hauteur. It is the birthplace of all hatreds and feuds and, the poet thinks, it will spell disaster of hell.[4] It is this view of speech that urges Bhavabhūti to plead for cultured, sweet and honest words even in the normal dealings of life. Bhavabhūti wants the words to be used carefully and he insists on never injuring any one by speech, whether he is a friend or a total stranger or it is one's own wife.[5] Bhavabhūti's Lava is angered by the solidier's speech as much because it hurt his material spirit as because the soldier's words smacked of arrogance and pride and discounted the possibility of a rival hero. Again, it is this view of Bhavabhūti that colours his compassion for women in the male-dominated society and urges him to denounce the rashness of men in respect of their flower-like wives, men's abusive language and their cruel behaviour.[6] Bhavabhūti goes to the length of saying that cruelty and wickedness are peculiarly vicious male traits.[7] The passionate and moving utterances of Madayantikā against the harsh and rash behaviour of Nandana towards his bride exemplify the statement. Likewise it is implied that Paraśurāma suffered defeat at the hands of the boy-Rāma as much by the latter's superior prowess as by his own arrogance and pride. So, Bhavabhūti pleads for truthful and delightful speech, which he compares

to the sacred Cow, the Mother of all bliss. Such speech can fulfil desires, tear misfortune away, bring renown to a person and destroy his sins.[8] As in life, so in literary art.

On the esoteric level Bhavabhūti regards *vāc* as *śabda-brahman*, the symbol and expression of the highest truth. He believes that the seers have a direct vision of this truth. The seers would never utter, therefore, words which would confound the true meaning.[9] In fact, the splendour of bliss scintillates through their words. The speech of good men is always in conformity with their meaning. They do not use words to hide their thoughts.[10] The seers do one better; because meaning and truth run after their very utterances.[11] That is why, the Goddess of speech serves such gifted men and seers like a submissive maid.[12]

Bhavabhūti believes that the highest truth, the *śabda-brahman*, reveals itself to gifted men, as to the seers, in a moment of spontaneous inspiration when their emotions are profoundly stirred. The loving detail with which Bhava-bhūti recreates the birth of Vālmīki's poetic genius illumines Bhavabhūti's outlook on *vāc* on the creative side. As a matter of fact, a detailed description of this incident was not quite necessary for the dramatic story of the *Uttara-rāma-carita* (URC) ; an emphatic allusion to the *krauñcha* episode and the awakening of Vālmīki's inspiration would have sufficed. The elaboration is therefore, a pointer to Bhavabhūti's view on poetic art and the mission of literature. Poetic art must arise through a profound stirring of emotious and must strive, in all honesty, to give expıession to the deeper truths of human life.

[2]

Bhavabhūti must have turned to literary art with such conviction about the significance and role of *vāc* in life as well as in literature. However, the circumstances of his birth and his family background[13] do not appear to be condu-cive to a literary career that he evidently chose for himself under the compulsion of his inner urge. Bhavabhūti's family of Kāśyapa gotra belonged to the Taittirīya bıanch of Black

Yajurveda. The members of this Brahmin family were very devout; they observed religious vows, performed Soma sacrifice and maintained five fires which they ritually worshipped. One ancestor of Bhavabhūti Mahādeva performed a Vājapeya sacrifice. His grandfather and father were renowned for their learning and holiness. The entire family tradition of Bhavabhūti, it can be seen, was of Vedic learning, ritual observances, holiness and piety of conduct. The family also ran a Vedic school or taught in such a school. It is obvious therefore that a descendant of such a vaidika and Yājñika family should be expected to carry on the traditions of his family and continue the work of his learned and holy forefathers. Actually Bhavabhūti had undergone the family training too. He had studied the Vedas, the Upaniṣads and together with the Vedānta he had read the Sāṁkhya and Yoga philosophies as well.[14] Yet his inner urge drove him away from the Vedic and philosophical learning and the pious life of ritual observances. He realised early in his career that Vedic and esoteric learning and the halo of religious piety have nothing to do with creative art. In fact, they may even hinder a spontaneous expression of emotions that overwhelm human life. And so, he turned his back on his family tradition and entered the life of art. It appears from his autobiographical allusions that he cultivated friendship with a dramatic troupe and the actors.[15] This circumstantial influence may also have drawn him towards the art of drama. All this must definitely have annoyed and in fact angered the members of Bhavabhūti's family, his friends and acquaintances, and the people of his native place who held the family in respect. For, no one would like a promising young man of the learned and holy family to deviate from reputed tradition and adopt a dubious career of dramatic art and associate with actors who had no status in social life. It is these people who must have criticised Bhavabhūti severely and spoken disparagingly about his choice of career. Bhavabhūti's personal hurt and grievance are directed really against these people, namely his own relatives, friends and men of his native place, and not against the imaginary literary critics, as I have shown elsewhere.[16]

Bhavabhūti's literary venture, thus, springs from a genuine inner urge for art. So much so that he was prepared to bear the wrath and condemnation of his own people; he was ready later to leave his native place and seek asylum elsewhere in the pursuit of his literary career. He truly believed that *vāc* through which a poet must express is an immortal phase of the Soul, it is an art of the Spirit.[17] Bhavabhūti is an acknowledged master of words. His mastery over the Sanskrit language may be due as much to his painstaking and intensive study as to his sincere and reverential devotion to the Goddess of speech.

[3]

The family antagonism towards Bhavabhūti's literary ventures and his hurt reaction expressed in the *Mālatīmādhava* (MM) suggest some basic traits of his nature. He appears to be a highly sensitive person, in fact, rather emotional. At the same time he seems to be an idealist who has the firmness of mind to pursue his chosen ideal and who, in turn, is prepared to face all kinds of odds in the course of his career. These character-traits, if not wrongly deduced, explain certainly the particular qualities and aspects of Bhavabhūti's writing.

The emotionalism of Bhavabhūti works in two ways. It is responsible for the *abandon* with which Bhavabhūti writes. The poet in him cannot be satisfied with a mere expression of an idea or an emotion, leave aside suggesting it cleverly and skilfully, as Kālidāsa is often seen to be doing. Even in a direct verbal expression Bhavabhūti must examine an idea or an emotion from every possible angle and aspect, and probe into it to divine its shades so as to reach ultimately its very core and essence. Consider from this point of view the expression of Rāma's love for Sītā, of Mādhava for Mālatī, the description of Sītā's mind torn between love and resentment on encountering Rāma in the solitude of Pañcavatī, the poet's ideas about what a child means to the parents.[18] Bhavabhūti's verses in these portions are very elaborate, analytically encompassing, often revealing the splendour of poetic imagination. But let us not forget that

they also take us down to the depth of the feeling, which very few poets have been able to reach and almost no one to surpass. The literary grandeur of Bhavabhūti's writing is a gift of his intense emotionalism and not merely that of poetic fancy. In poetic fancy we have another master, namely Bāṇabhaṭṭa. After all, poetry is 'felt emotion'; and the intensity and the varied nature of feeling are bound to colour the poetic expression of that emotion, bestowing on it a profundity and multi-coloured splendour.

Emotionalism has its drawbacks too. It rarely knows restraint and results in excess where it is neither expected nor necessary. This is to be noticed in Bhavabhūti's treatment of sentimental situations. He overdoes the heroism of Rāma in the *Mahāvīracarita* (MVC) and of Lava in URC. The descriptions of the powers of the prowess of these heroes cross the credible limit of the heroic and pass into wonder the marvellous sentiment. But while this could somehow be understood because Rāma, at least, is supposed to be a divine incarnation, the excess in the treatment of pathos is an aesthetic error. The pathos that Bhavabhūti creates at the final disappearance of Mālatī, at Mādhava's insanity that takes him to the verge of suicide, and the overwhelming grief which surrounds all the people concerned, including the cool-thinking, philosophic Kāmandakī, is not in good taste from an artistic point of view. The entire play seems to be washed out in the flood of sentimental tears. It is not in good taste even as theatric art because such excessive pathos is bound to be artificial and tax the patience of the spectators. It is likely that Bhavabhūti's occasional intrusion on his own dramatic design—his egotism—and his repetition of his own verses from one to another play may be due to the same emotionalism, as both display similar lack of artistic restraint. So, the emotional urge of Bhavabhūti seems to be cut both ways. While in some situations it reveals the depth of human emotions rarely probed, it mars in other situations the revealing grace and the richness of artistic suggestions.

[4]

This brings us to Bhavabhūti's statement that "Pathos

(*karuṇa*) is the only sentiment; the other sentiments are merely its modified forms; as bubbles, ripples, eddies are simply modifications of water which it assumes under different causal conditions."[19] Some critics look upon this statement as Bhavabhūti's pronouncement of a new literary principle governing the composition of a poetic work. Since old, Bharata spoke of eight rhetorical sentiments (*rasas*) which deserve to be poetically and aesthetically treated. Bharata described ten patterns of dramatic compositions in which the eight *rasas* could be presented. Examining Bharata's recommendations it appears that though he has conceived a separate pattern like *Utsṛṣṭikāṅka* for the delineation of pathos as a governing sentiment of the drama, as *Prahasana* and to some extent *Bhaṇa* are meant for the treatment of laughter, he has regareded them as smallish in structure comprising one or two acts and, in a way, derivative patterns. For Bharata *Naṭaka* and *Prakaraṇa* are the norm patterns from whlch he derives the other patterns. The *Nāṭaka* and *Prakaraṇa* revolve round love (*śṛṅgāra*) ; and the *Nāṭaka* with the royal hero has the colour of the heroic (*vīra*) also. Bharata's other patterns like *Dima*, *Samavakāra*, *Vyāyoga*, *Ihāmṛga* are essentially based on the heroic. In other words, Bharata inclines towards love and heroism (*śṛṅgāra* and *vīra*) as the governing sentiments for a drama and accommodates other sentiments round these two. *Karuṇa* as the principal sentiment is possible only in a small play of one or two acts, and that too as a result or consequence of the heroic *vīra*, according to Bharata's theoretical view.[20] The other side of the picture is that Bharata prefers a mixture of *rasas*, love and heroism dominating, others sprinkled round them like flowers, in order that drama may entertain people of different tastes.[21] The practice of Sanskrit dramatists too shows that they strove to build plays of love and/or heroism. And the later dictum that *śṛṅgāra* or *vīra* should be the dominating sentiment of a drama[22] comes naturally from Bharata's precepts. If Bhavabhūti's statement, therefore, suggests building a full-length play round *karuṇā rasa*, it is a new literary venture.

Another way of looking at the statement is to regard it as an attempt to reduce the eight sentiments to an all-embracing

one ; it is an attempt at *rasa*-synthesis, as Dr. Raghavan thinks. To my mind, the first suggestion in this direction came from Abhinavagupta who wanted to subsume the eight or nine *rasas* under one category of *Māharasa* ; for whatever be the particular emotional effect of an individual *rasa* according to its basic nature, the final effect of every one of the *rasas* in that of *ānanda* or aesthetic relish ; so from the point of view of the ultimate impact Abhinava thought that *ānanda* could be looked upon as the *Mahārasa* and love, heroism etc. as its aspects. A positive attempt at synthesis is made by Bhoja who suggests *śṛṅgāra* or love as the organic *rasa* and other sentiments as its forms.[23] Bhavabhūti could not have known these attempts at synthesis. But his preference for *karuṇa* as the *prakṛti rasa* may appear to be an early perspective on synthesis.

Now, whether Bhavabhūti's statement is taken as a suggestion of a new literary trend or as an attempt at *rasa*-synthesis, neither would bear theoretical support or practical justification. In the first place, Bhavabhūti's own writing shows that he was himself emotionally attracted by various sentiments. The heroic prowess of Rāma and the marvel that attended his almost divine achievements urged Bhavabhūti compose his MVC.[24] In writing MM he was moved by the theme of love and was fully aware of the prolific play of other sentiments which, he thought, adorn a dramatic composition.[25] And in URC which is undoubtedly dominated by pathos other sentiments like the heroic, the furious, the marvellous, and even a touch of mild laughter, are not absent. Bhavabhūti's own dramatic practice belies, therefore, the idea that *karuṇā* could dominate a play and take the position of principal *rasa*. *Karuṇa* is not in a dominating position in Bhavabhūti's first two plays; and in URC if *karuṇa* has very strong colours they are derived from the Rāma story itself, and aesthetically the pathos has been supported by other sentiments.

In the context of theatric representation *karuṇa* must always have a restricted place. In poetry it may perhaps be possible to dwell elaborately on the pathetic, because a reader can take the pathos in small doses reading with

voluntary breaks. This facility is not available in a theatric experience; and excess of pathos may therefore try the patience and endurance of spectators who may cease enjoying the pathos. It is not without reason that Bharata assigned *karuṇa*—and *hāsya* too—to a small play, limiting the duration of the emotional impact and preferred them as auxiliary or supporting *rasas*. Master artists like Kālidāsa treated the pathos in the situation of Śakuntalā's leave-taking with artistic restraint. And when it came to representing the prolonged search of the mad Purūravas for his lost Urvaśī, Kālidāsa constructed the entire scene not with elaborate lament but with theatric devices of song and dance, turning the lament into a *ballet*. The compulsive requirements of theatre art could not have escaped Bhavabhūti. But the emotional poet in him seems to have got the better of the dramatist in him.

Unfulfilled love and love in separation have pathetic overtones. *Karuṇa* results as a natural consequence of the heroic when heroism gives rise to death and disaster. Sometimes laughter may have a pathetic shade as in Śudraka's play or in the cinema stories of Charlie Chaplin. But how can one associate the *bībhatsa*, *bhayānaka*, *adbhuta* with pathos ? The theoretical difficulty is not easy to bypass; and the *karuṇa*-synthesis must remain, therefore, only a causal idea.

So, I am not in favour of regarding Bhavabhūti's statement about *karuṇa-rasa* either as an indication of a new literary trend or as an attempt at *rasa*-synthesis. Ānandavardhana seems to be the first to recognise the Rāmayaṇa as an epic of *karuṇa*. Before him Bhavabhūti probably felt the same. Bhavabhūti's Rāma says : "Life and consciousness seem to have been put into Rāma only for experiencing pain and sorrow." It is this aspect of the Rāma-*kathā* and Vālmīki's epic that Bhavabhūti is revealing by the statement under consideration. What it means is that the tale of Rāma's life is a tale of sorrow mounted on sorrow. Bhavabhūti's high regard for the Rāmāyaṇa and his personal devotion to Rāma must have urged the realisation that essential character of the epic and of its hero is centered in

karuṇa. This realisation finds expression in the poet's *rasa* statement.

It is also possible that the statement may have a personal reference. Bhavabhūti's own experience of life was not happy, at least till his later life, when king Yaśovarman offered him his patronage. The personal experiences may have widened Bhavabhūti's horizon of understanding. He may have felt, as many poets have felt, that sorrow or pathos is the abiding emotion (*sthāyi-bhāva*) of human life, and pleasure and other experiences are only temporary diversions. In literary representations too we find that the loves, joys, laughter, wonders and heroic ideals of people show a variation from men to men and from one country to another; but the tears of humanity which spring from the governing sorrow are identical; sorrow and sadness bind the entire humanity together. Bhavabhūti's commentator Vīrarāghava observes about the statement that *karuṇa* is the overwhelming emotion of human life and it effects not only the common man but a Yogin also who is above worldly sentiments. Bhavabhūti's view about *karuṇa rasa* has a basis, therefore, probably in his personal life and certainly in the understanding of human life as such. The poet is echoing a thought which religious teachers and philosophers have often expressed.[26]

[5]

The fact that Bhavabhūti preferred literary career to the traditional and family vocation, which was likely to have been smooth, prosperous and prestigious, suggests two character-traits; driving idealism and defiance of socially approved values. These traits explain, I think, some characteristics of his writing. Bhavabhūti lived in an age in which polygamy prevailed, at least among the rich and ruling classes and subordination of women to men was tacitly accepted by society. Along with his idealism Bhavabhūti was a very sensitive poet, as we have seen. So the inequality between man and woman must have hurt his sensitive nature deeply. If an individual was helpless against this social

tyranny and injustice and lacked any means or power to change the social fabric, he could at least focus attention on the social evil and endeavour through art effort to render 'poetic justice' to the wronged woman and the suppressed class. This is one important reason why Bhavabhūti turned to Rāma as his dramatic hero, apart from his personal devotion to him and his regard for the great epic. Rāma is the solitary example of a monogamous ideal in ancient family life. Similarly, in the social play MM Bhavabhūti chose young pairs of lovers; so that the question of polygamy and rival wives could be kept at a safe distance and, at the same time, the social picture presented in the play may not be thought unrealistic on the contemporary background.

I need not argue here that URC is not a formal tragedy in spite of its deep colours of pathos.[27] But it would not be correct to say that Bhavabhūti brought about the final and permanent reunion of Rāma and Sītā and ended the play on a happy and blissful note only to conform to the dictum of the *Nāṭyaśāstra.* The happy ending is urged by Bhavabhūti's strong desire to do justice to the wronged Sītā. For this purpose he draws on his additional urge of defiance; and makes himself bold to challenge the political decision of Rāma, against Rāma's popularly accepted divinity and against his own emotional adoration of the epic and the epic hero. Rāma's own son Lava ridicules the prowess of Rāma, albeit through ignorance and in child-like candour. More importantly, Janaka pours his wrath on the head of Rāma. And Janaka has grown grey in ruling over a kingdom and in administering kingly obligations. Besides, the philosophical wisdom of Janaka is beyond question as it is vouched for by the Upaniṣadic thinkers and has won him the title of 'royal sage.' Such an august person as Janaka shows the lop-sided hollowness of Rāma's conception of *prajānurañjana.* As Janaka points out, the masses or subjects comprise children, women, old folk, decrepit and diseased people. A king, even an ideal king, is not expected to heed the opinion of each and every person who opens his mouth to speak and act precipitately on it. Rather, a king must weigh and judge; listen to the views of really wise and competent men. A

king cannot afford to be emotional while taking important decisions, which must be the result of calm, detached and rational thinking. An emotional and precipitate decision is likely to perpetrate a serious wrong rather than repairing one. With an urge of such understanding Bhavabhūti uses his art to subject Rāma to severe criticism and invents Vālmīki's play to demonstrate the irresponsible nature of public talk and its dreadful consequences. It is poetic justice to Sītā and also a political lesson for Rāma. The artistic and bold treatment of the Rāma story, which changes the original epic, could have been possible as much by Bhavabhūti's social defiance as by his sense of justice and his sincere compassion for the woman. The hesitation and self-reproach of Rāma in using his sword against Śambūka come in the same category. Bhavabūti hits here against the tyranny of religion and religious beliefs which gave one-sided, exclusive privilege to the Brahmin class. The poet's heart melts at the social treatment of the *Śūdra muni*, as it does at the social tyranny and man's cruelty in respect of women. In MM he gives verbal expression to his feelings; in URC he attempts to right the wrong.

[6]

Persons who carry a deep sense of idealism with them are generally serious in their outlook on life. This may explain Bhavabhūti's special attraction for the solemn in life and in nature. While most of the poets of the classical vein describe nature with conventional imagery and in pleasant fanciful colours, and even when the nature-worshipping Kālīdāsa shuts his eyes against the dreadful and fearsome aspects of nature, it is given to a singular poet like Bhavabhūti to bring to the readers the vast, terrifying, bare expanses of mountain regions and wild forests; paint the tortuous streams of water gushing down hilly slopes and clash with booming reverberations; recall huge serpents coiling round enormous trunks of trees and lizards drinking sweat-drops trickling from the bodies of pythons to moisten their parched throats. It is in similar strain that Bhavabhūti

paints the weird and almost supernatural atmosphere of cemetery grounds and the aweful ritual practices carried thereon. This is a peculiarity rarely found in Sanskrit poetic literature.

The serious vein may have prompted Bhavabhūti to neglect the traditional character of the Vidūṣaka. But in the Rāma plays the comic character would have been out of place. In the social play MM Bhavabhūti preferred the figure of pīṭhamarda as a companion of the young hero because that was appropriate for theory and for art. Yet it need not be said that Bhavabhūti lacked the sense of humour totally. The *nāndī* verse of MM and Makaranda's ruse to discomfit and frustrate Nandana imply very interesting situations full of mirth. The talk of the *āśrama* pupils and the general holiday atmosphere, Lava's innocent replies to questions about his parentage, all in URC, are certain to evoke delightful laughter. The light and mirthful air which surrounds Kālīdāsa's plays, and the bubbling, almost boisterous humour which prevades Śūdraka's play are, of course, not to be found in Bhavabhūti's writing. It must naturally be due to the poet's seriousness of purpose and the intensity of his approach to his art work, both stemming from his idealistic vein and his serious view about the mission of literary art.

[7]

A theatric point. According to the traditional theory the *prastāvanā* of a Sanskrit drama, which is a relic of Bharata's *pūrvaraṅga*, is intended for performing the religious salutations (*devatā-vandana*), for bringing the collective mind of the audience to a sense of enjoyment by offering musical entertainment, and mainly for introducing the poet and his play (*kāvya-praśasti, kāvināma-saṁkīrtana*).[28] The five varieties of *prastāvanā* which Bharata describes are essentially meant for suggesting the opening of the dramatic story. It was necessary because the ancient stage did not use 'drop' curtain or anything much by way of scenic arrangement. In strict theory, therefore, *prastāvanā* was an introduction of

the play and the playwright, and the *āmukha* so called, which came at the end of the prastāvanā, was an introduction of the opening scene.[29] It is likely that his fine distinction between *prastāvanā* and *āmukha* was lost in course of time or was modified for convenience by the stage performers. The later theory, of course, treats *prastāvanā* and *āmukha* as identical things.[30] Now, the sūtradhāra and his assistant in Bhavabhūti's MM announce the roles they are going to play in the dramatic performance. And in URC the prastāvanā is broken in the middle to suggest the scene of action of the opening act, where the sūtradhāra and his assistant are supposed to play the roles of court bards. Bhavabhūti merges the prologue into the dramatic story, instead of merely hinting its opening. I do not think, however, that Bhavabhūti is inventing a new technique of drama production, as Bhāsa did. Such merging of the prologue into the drama itself is not found in other Sanskrit plays; and it must have come only to suit the convenience of the dramatic troupe which staged Bhavabhūti's plays. Bharata speaks of *pravṛtti*, which is variation in production technique to suit local convenience or taste.[31] Bhavabhūti's close association with the actors must have urged him to adopt this practice.

References

1. Cf. वाक् प्रतिष्ठानि देहिनां व्यवहारतन्त्राणि । वाचि पुण्यापुण्यहेतवो व्यवस्था: सर्वथा जनानामायतन्ते । MM. IV. 4. [13-14].
2. Cf. Sumantra's admiration for Lava's manner of speaking: परिपूतस्वभावोऽयं बत कुमार: प्राचेतसान्तवासी । वदत्ययमभिसंपन्न-मार्वेण संस्कारेण । URC.V. 30.[1-2]
3. Cf. URC. II. 2. : प्रियप्राया वृत्तिः विनयमधुरो वाचि नियमः ।
4. Cf. ऋषयो राक्षसी माहुर्वाचिमुन्मत्तहप्तयो: । सा योनि: सर्ववैराणां सा हि लोकस्य निर्ऋतिः ।। URC. V. 29.
5. See MM. VII.[68-72].
6. See MM. VII.[58-60]
7. Cf. नृशंसता हि नाम पुरुषदोष: । MVC. II. 48.[1]

8. Cf. URC.V. 30 :
कामान् दुग्धे विप्रकर्षत्यलक्ष्मीं कीर्तिं सूते दुष्कृतं या हिनस्ति ।
तां चाप्येतां मातरं मङ्गलानां धेनुं धीराः सूनृतां वाचमाहुः ॥
9. Cf. URC. VII, Garbhanāṭaka : साक्षात्कृतधर्माणः ऋषयः । तेषां अमृतभराणि भगवतां परोरजांसि प्रज्ञानानि न क्वचिद् व्याहन्यन्ते इति अनभिशङ्कनीयानि इति ।
10. Cf. URC. IV. 18 :
आविर्भूतज्योतिषां ब्राह्मणानां ये व्याहारास्तेषु मा संशयोऽभूत् ।
भद्रा ह्येषां वाचि लक्ष्मीर्निषिक्ता नैते वाचं विप्लुतार्थां वदन्ति ॥
11. Cf. URC. I. 10. : लौकिकानां हि साधूनामर्थं वागनुवर्तते ।
ऋषीणां पुनराद्यानां वाचमर्थोऽनुधावति ॥
12. Cf. URC. I. 2 : यं ब्रह्माणमियं देवी वाग्वश्येवानुवर्तते ।
13. See MVC, *prastāvanā* : the significant phrases are, तैत्तिरीयिणः काश्यपाः चरणगुरवः पङ्क्तिपावनाः पञ्चाग्नयो धृतव्रताः सोमपीथिनः...ब्रह्मवादिनः...। For explanations, if necessary, see Introduction to my edition of URC, Popular Publishing House, Tower Road, Surat, (2nd ed.) 1965.
14. Cf. MM. I. 7. यद्वेदाध्ययनं तथोपनिषदां सांख्यस्य योगस्य च ज्ञानं, तत्कथनेन किं न हि ततः कश्चिद् गुणो नाटके ।
15. Cf. 'कविः मित्रधेयमस्माकम्...' from MVC prologue.
16. The reference is to MM. I. 6 : 'ये नाम केचिदिह नः प्रथयन्त्यवज्ञाम्' etc. The problem is fully dealt with in my Paper, "The Detractors of Bhavabhūti"
17. Cf. Nāndī : verse of URC: वन्देमहि च तां वाचमभृतामात्मनः कलाम् ।
18. Cf. URC I. 34, 35, 36, 38, 39; III. 11, 12, 39; VI. 5;
MM. III. 5-7, 16; IV. 4; V. 7, 10
URC. III. 13
URC. III. 17, VI. 22
19. URC. III. 47 : एको रसः करुण तव निमित्तभेदाद्
भिन्नः पृथक् पृथगिवाश्रयते विवर्तान् ।
आवर्तबुद्बुदतरङ्गमयान् विकारान्
अम्भो यथा, सलिलमेव हि तत्समस्तम् ॥
See also my Introduction to URC. pp. 104 ff.

20. See my *Nāṭya-mañjarī-saurabha* (Sanskrit Dramatic theory) BORI, 1981
21. Cf. *Bharata Nāṭyaśāstra*, VII. 120; my *Bharata-nāṭya-mañjarī*, BORI, 1975
22. Cf. एक एव भवेदङ्गी शृङ्गारो वीर एव वा ।
    Daśarūpaka III. 33 has एको रसोऽङ्गी कर्तव्यो वीरः शृङ्गार एव वा ।
23. See, Bhoja's *Śṛṅgāraprakāśa*; also, Dr. Raghavan, *Number of Rasas*.
24. Cf. MVC. I. 6 : वीराद्भुतप्रियतया रघुनन्दनस्य
    धर्मद्रुहो दमयितुश्चरितं निबद्धम् ॥
25. Cf. MM. I. 4 :
    भूम्ना रसानां गहनाः प्रयोगाः सौहार्दहृद्यानि विचेष्टितानि ।
    औद्धत्यमायोजितकामसूत्रं चित्राः कथा वाचि विदग्धता च ॥
26. Cf. St. Tukārama's observation : 'सुख पाहतां जवापाडें दुःख पर्वताएवढें'
27. See my *Tragedy and Sanskrit Drama*, Popular Prakashan-Bombay, 1974.
28. See *Nāṭyaśāstra* V; my *Bharata-nāṭya-mañjarī*, Introduc, tion, under *Pūrvaraṅga*.
29. See my *Nāṭya-mañjarī-saurabha, op. cit.*
30. Cf. *Sāhityadarpaṇa*, VI. 32 :
    आमुखं तत्तु विज्ञेयं नाम्ना प्रस्तावनापि सा ॥
31. See my *Nāṭya-mañjarī-saurabha*; also *Bharata-nāṭya-mañjarī, op. cit.*

17

THE DRAMATIC PROBLEM OF UTTARA-RĀMA-CARITA

[1]

I have chosen a limited problem for this talk : the dramatic problem of *Uttara-rāma-carita* (URC). I limited it on account of the limit of time that I must accept considering your patience. I cannot forget my own limitations also. At the same time I wish to focus your attention on a limited question of literary significance. Even after centuries of Sanskritic studies our approach to Sanskrit literature remains an approach of language study. Whether we study a Śāstra text or a poem or a drama, it is the study of Sanskrit, not the study of the thought and of the art expressed through the medium of words that engages our attention and consumes our energy. Our critical efforts are limited to tackling problems of date and chronology and our aesthetic approach is confined to tabulation of source-material, changes made by the poet, superficial characterization and an appreciation of this or that aspect of style, culminating in a collection of *subhāṣitas*. Not that this is not important. The danger is from the prevalent attitude that anything other than this is not 'scholarship.' As a matter of fact, the above approach is superficial and preliminary to the understanding of real art which takes us to the very core of life. A great work of art is an illuminating vision of life. My object in tackling a specific problem here is to make you aware,—aware only,—if possible, of this significance of art. It is immaterial whether you accept or do not accept my interpretation. It should be enough if you understood my approach and thought it worthwhile.

[2]

In composing a drama of the type of URC, what is the dramatic, the artistic intent of Bhavabhūti? There is no doubt that he is presenting the story of Rāma, the later life of Rāma, *uttaram rāmacaritam*, as the Sūtradhāra says. There is no *pūrva* Rāma or *uttara* Rāma; because Rāma represents an ideal both for the poet and his audience also, and probably for us too. Rāma does not change, in the sense that the 'earlier' and the 'later' in his life do not show an internal inconsistency. Some critics tell us that Rāma does not even grow in this play. I am inclined to think that Rāma does grow, in the sense that a new awareness comes to him. But since this awareness is of an organic growth it does not present a contradiction and Rāma still remains an ideal, although a human ideal.

The later life of Rāma is full of pathos. In fact, as Rāma himself says: *Duḥkha-saṁvedanāya eva Rāme caitanyam āhitam* ı (i. 47a). Rāma seems to have been born for tasting the bitter cup of life. It is not only the later but the entire life of Rāma that is a tale of sadness and sorrow. Is it Bhavabhūti's intention to catch this agony and give it a dramatic form? Some indications in the play may imply this. In describing the *pūrva carita* of Rāma, through a series of pictures in the first Act of the play, Bhavabhūti catches many a moment of accute agony, especially in relation to the abduction of Sīta and its psychological effect on Rāma. It is such a great grief as would break the heart of adamant and make the very stones weep. And towards the end of the first Act when the separation once again confronts him Rāma breaks down in utter misery. Rāma hides this personal sorrow from the public eye. But the pent-up pathos of Rāma's emotional life '(*Puṭapāka-pratīkāśo Rāmasya karuṇo rasaḥ* ı' iii. 1) bursts its dam of confinement and flows unchecked on the background of Pañcavaṭī and Janasthāna, as the second and the third Acts of the play show. The very memory of Sītā is apt to open up the springs of Rāma's heart; and so, even in witnessing a play in which Sītā figures, Rāma faints with a shock of sorrow, as we see in the seventh

Act. The elderly persons who surround, Rāma with a loving care are deeply aware of this emotional state of Rāma and their reactions and criticisms are naturally tempered by this awareness. But even the kids, Kuśa and Lava, who have not recognised Rāma as their father yet, are conscious of the profound sorrow of Rāma's life : Lava is touched by the tears of Rāma; and Kuśa who has mastered the Rāmāyana story explains that the very deep mutual love and the unending separation could not but make the life of Rāma so utterly miserable (vi. 30). On top of all this picture of pathos spread over the whole canvas of the play, Bhavabhūti appears to make a theoretical pronouncement that *Karuṇa* in the only sentiment and that the other sentiments are only modified forms of *Karuṇa*, as whirlpools, bubbles and ripples are of water (*Eko rasaḥ Karuṇa eva* I iii . 47).

We may admit that pathos, *Karuṇa*, is the governing sentiment of Rāma-carita (the life of Rāma). But should this admission explain the dramatic intent also? Is Bhavabhūti showing us the tragedy of Rāma's life? Is URC a tragedy?

In spite of the picture of colossal pathos it must be definitely said that URC is not a tragedy. A tragedy is a particular type of dramatic construction. It must possess certain formal requisites. It is a story of disaster and ends in a crash. Although pathos is inevitable in a tragedy, mere pathos does not make a tragedy. Else, *The Merchant of Venice* would be a tragedy: and so many of the Sanskrit plays like the *Svapnavāsavadatta*, the *Śākuntala*, the *Mṛcchakaṭika* would be tragedies—which they are not. These are serious comedies or tragi-comedies.[1] It is something like the formal structure of a rhetorical figure: if you change the mode of expression you change the *alaṁkāra*, even though the idea remains the same.

Bhavabhūti's dramatic design in URC unfolds itself towards a happy culmination, an end of all sorrow. The Sūtradhāra and his assistant assure us in the prologue of the happy end. ('*Sarvathā ṛṣayo devatāś ca śreyo*

1. See my, *Tragedy and Sanskrit Drama*, Popular Prakashan, Bombay, 1974.

vidhāsyanti !') the efforts of Vālmīki and Arundhatī are directed towards achieving the reunion of Rāma and Sītā and the reconciliation of the people; and the final Act of the play shows this denoument. It appears therefore that *Karuṇa* was the colour which Bhavabhūti chose—and quite naturally—to paint the picture of Rāma's later life. But the form and the context of the picture are different. What then is the meaning of Rāma's agony and sorrow? In answering this question we must go beyond the mere *Karuṇa rasa.*

[3]

Critics have found the significance of this sorrowful tale of Rāma in the love of the couple, the conjugal love of husband and wife. Dr. S.K. De, for instance, says that Bhavabhūti's problem was adequate motivation of an already accepted story and this Bhavabhūti does by idealizing conjugal love. Dr. S.K. Belwalkar asks : How could a pair of lovers like Rāma and Sītā be at all estranged? And if they were separated how could they be reunited? Bhavabhūti shows this psychological reconciliation in the third Act of the play ; and the actual reunion takes place in the seventh and the last Act. Prof. Karmarkar mentions the same point of the love of the couple and says that Bhavabhūti's play shows how a great love between the husband and the wife is able to endure and triumph over the sorrows of life. These opinions have the same theme, though the emphasis varies according to personal standpoint.

One of the most significant notes in this sad symphony of Rāma's life is the mutual affection of Rāma and Sītā. Bhavabhūti has demonstrated this love with vivid eloquence of theatrical art and with a poetic abandon of which he is a master. There is no doubt that it is this great love, this *advaita* of affection, that enables Rāma and, especially, Sītā to reach instantaneously the plane of perfect understanding and to accomplish a willing reconciliation. The third Act of the play is a witness to this effect, the demonstration of '*Hṛdayam eva jānāti prītiyogam parasparam* !' We could

understand this tremendous power of love which heals age-old wounds and binds together the two hearts, temporarily estranged, with a new bond of tenderness. And yet we must ask: Is this Bhavabhūti's dramatic problem? Is he concerned, dramatically speaking, with the problem of reunion only? Yes, apparently; but on deeper analysis the answer will have to be in the negative.

Dr. De speaks of 'idealization' of conjugal love.' The phrasing is rather loose. A dramatist could not show idealization of love by showing a husband abandon his loving and utterly helpless wife. Idealization of love demands that the husband stands at the back of his wife and lends the full strength of his love to defend the attack on her character and is ready, if need be, to renounce everything in life but his love. The story of Edward VIII, king of Great Britain, who renounced the throne for his love, and other such stories of lovers who have courted calumny, catastrophe and crash for the sake of their love, would answer this description. This is *idealization of love* in literary art. Obviously Rāma is made of different stuff; and therefore Bhavabhūti's story too could not take this colour. There is a difference between 'idealization' of love and showing the 'ideal' of love. What Dr. De means is probably the latter, namely that Bhavabhūti presents the Rāma story as a story of ideal love. This is in effect what Dr. Belwalkar also says; and Prof. Karmarkar implies the same idea, though he has stated it in terms of a moral that could be deduced from the play. The theme of the love and happiness of an ideal couple (*dāṁpatya-prema* and *dāṁpatya-sukha*) has struck an ancient commentator like Vīrarāghava too. In the hands of the modern critics we see its varying treatment and exposition.

I am unable to accept this interpretation for two reasons: First, it reduces the URC to a play of reunion and reconciliation of a husband and wife; and I feel that it is something more, in fact, much more, than a play of ideal love. Secondly, this interpretation does not cover and explain all the aspects of Bhavabhūti's dramatic design and the plot-structure of his play. I will endeavour to show this.

There are a few plays in Sanskrit literature that could be

described as plays of union and reunion : *Svapnavāsavadatta*, *Vikramorvaśīya*, *Śākuntala*, *Mṛcchakaṭika*. In all these plays the points of union and separation differ, as also the particular cause of separation. For instance, the SV opens after the separation has taken place and all the six Acts of the play are devoted to bringing about the reunion. In VIK the first three Acts present the theme of union ; the separation comes in the fourth Act ; and the reunion is achieved towards the end of the fourth Act and a more stable reunion in the fifth and the final Act, The construction of the ŚĀK is almost similar ; so that the first three Acts deal with union, the fourth is a poetic interlude leading to the separation in the fifth Act, and the sixth and the seventh together accomplish the reunion. In MṚC a virtual union takes place in the fifth Act, sixth to eighth Acts prepare the ground and complete the fact of separation (by the murder of Vasantasenā), and the ninth and the tenth Acts gradually bring about the re-union, with which the play closes. The causes of separation vary naturally from play to play. Vāsavadattā was separated from Udayana for a political motive, namely, that of winning his lost kingdom back, in which task Vāsavadattā was an hindrance, the mutual love of the couple having resulted in neglect of state affairs by Udayana. Urvaśī was separated from Purūravas partly on account of the intolerance of passionate and possessive love on her part, and partly on account of a curse. Kālidāsa uses the same motive of curse, resulting in loss of memory (which is termed 'amnesia' in modern medical jargon), for separating Śakuntalā from Duṣyanta. As for Vasantasenā, the malice of a licentious villain, Śakāra, coupled with her bad luck in getting into a wrong cart, dog her footsteps to apparent death and separation from Cārudatta. But apart from these variations, which the nature of the story and the treatment of art necessarily demand, these plays resemble one another in their structure and design : union, separation and reunion constitute the pieces which make up their structure, the first (namely, union) receiving due emphasis or being omitted in the design.

The URC resembles these plays in its structure. The union

has already taken place. The first Act therefore works up the issue of separation and all the remaining Acts take up the theme of reunion, psychological reunion in Act iii, and the actual meeting, in the midst of blessings and rejoicing in the final Act. But in spite of this resemblance you will notice a difference of tremendous significance. In all the plays which I mentioned earlier the distance between separation and reunion is bridged by events which test the sincerity of love and carry an assurance of abiding love. The heroes suffer, and suffer tremendously. And the knowledge of this suffering is presented to the separated wives directly or indirectly through a faithful report (as in ŚĀK) ; because such a knowledge is also an assurance that the separation has not severed the bond of deep mutual love. It is on this background that the reunion takes place. It may be immediate, as in VIK ; but if it is delayed it is only because certain physical events, quite normal, have to happen before the husband and wife can come together : Udayana's kingdom must be won before Vāsavadattā can meet him; Duṣyanta's memory comes back to him after six years and during that period of time Śakuntalā has been away at the Mārīca *āśrama* where Duṣyanta must be taken to meet his long-lost wife; Vasantasenā had to be discovered alive and then she had to run to the place of execution before she could save Cārudatta from the gallows and be blessed with a union.

When you consider the URC in this light it will be difficult to explain the purpose of all the Acts from the fourth to the seventh, including the *garbhanāṭaka*, on the assumption that the URC is only a play of love and reunion. The deep love has been shown even before the separation comes. The criticism of Vāsantī is understandable and it serves its purpose in bringing about the psychological reconciliation in the third Act. The events that follow cannot justify the postponement of actual reunion on the mere ground of estranged love. Rāma and Sitā did not need any mutual assurance of abiding love. They had already reached a plane of understanding where love ripens into the *advaita* of the hearts and which rare mortals can reach. And if there was any misgiving, engendered by the pressure of unexplained

circumstances, it was cleared by the confessions of Rāma in the presence of Vāsantī and the invisible Sītā herself. In fact, the events after the third Act are not connected with love at all—which a drama of reunion is seriously concerned with. What has the anger of Janaka and the criticism of Lava to do with the issue of reunion? The *garbhanāṭaka*, too, loses its purpose in this context; and Prof. Karmarkar has been led to pronounce it as meaningless! If you answer the questions posed here by saying that the events of the latter Acts were necessary to appease the people without whose consent Rāma would not have accepted Sītā, you are going beyond the issue of reunion of love. If you treat the last four Acts of the play as a mere spectacular spinning out of the dramatic theme of love and reunion, they lose all meaning and the art of the play disappears. But there is a possibility that Bhavabhūti had a purpose in constructing these last four Acts which the critics have missed.

[4]

Assuming that a work of art presents an organic unity of thought or experience, it is of supreme importance to understand the place and purpose of every event and situation fitted into the structure by the creative efforts of the artist. From this point of view the events depicted in Acts iv to vii need a proper explanation. There are two currents, as I look at them, that underlie these events and give them a deep meaning. One is indicated by the criticism of Lava and the anger of Janaka, both disapproving the conduct of Rāma as a king. The second is represented by the elaborate machinery set into motion by Vālmīki (which, by the way, is a pure dramatic innovation) and culminating into the spectacular show of the *garbhanāṭaka*, presented in the huge auditorium built for the occasion on the bank of the Ganges.

The criticism of Lava is innocent. He is incensed by the insolent behaviour and the arrogant talk of Rāma's soldiers. Lava does not know Rāma personally; he has never seen him so far. But he knows the character of Rāma from his own study of the Rāmāyaṇa. He therefore expects

the soldiers who are, after all, the servants of Rāma to be 'as self-controlled as the King Rāma is known to be'. Besides he has learnt under the educative influence of Vālmīki that the language a person uses is really a keynote to his character. Bad, insolent language therefore is apt to spell hellish disaster for the world of people. There is an element of personal *Kṣatra* pride also in Lava's reaction which, however, is perfectly justified by his training and self-confidence. And so, he challenges the position of Rāma as the 'unparalleled hero of the triple world' and enumerates the unheroic actions of Rāma suggesting that the *Vṛddha-carita* would not stand a deeper probe and a closer scrutiny. This criticism by Lava of Rāma-carita, which the orthodox commentators and some critics could never approve of hits at the very kingly dignity of Rāma. It exposes the administrative and political weakness of Rāma's conduct as a king. And that is exactly the point it is intended to achieve. However unpalatable it may be to those who love and revere Rāma, it holds the king Rāma under a searchlight. What is remarkable is that Bhavabhūti who almost worshipped Rāma as a Deity could muster the boldness of artistic perception and expose the failings of an ideal hero.

The anger of Janaka is more concrete and deliberate. The very idea of Sītā's purification by an ordeal is repugnant to him and he angrily challenges the authority of the Fire to test the purity of his daughter 'born from the sacrificial grounds of the gods'. Janaka is quite convinced that the action of Rāma as a king in abandoning Sītā is a precipitate action (cf. *Aho Rāmasya rājñaḥ kṣiprakāritā* I) It lacks both, the political wisdom of a seasoned administrator and the common reasonableness of an experienced civilian. This is the interpretation you must put on Janaka's words; for, when Arundhatī runs to the defence of Rāma by saying that Rāma had to act as he did in order to placate and please his people, Janaka explodes in derision to say that the so-called people Rāma has vowed to placate comprise mostly bigoted Brahmins who know nothing beyond the words of the sacred texts, and children, dotards and decrepits, and a host of females, whose personal prejudices are absolutely worthless

in matters political. The entire injustice of the situation—for, Rāma has not only wronged Sītā, he has also done a wrong unto himself—so inflames Janaka that he is ready to punish Rāma *cāpena śāpena vā*, using either his imperial power or the power of his asceticism. It is only the moving appeal of Arundhatī and his own realization that Rāma was his son that calms Janaka down, though it cannot take away the root of the deep hurt. (See, Act iv; verses 24, 25).

You will be mistaken if you thought that the angry outburst of Janaka arose only from personal hurt. Of course, the hurt is there. Sītā was his daughter and he loved her very much. Besides, what father's blood would not boil at the treatment that was given to a daughter like Sītā especially by the husband of Rāma's calibre who stood for certain ideals ? But the anger of Janaka stems as much from personal emotion as, nay more, from the political thoughtlessness of Rāma. The significance of Janaka's opinion about the political conduct of Rāma and about the people can neither be ignored nor minimised. You must remember that Janaka is not only Sītā's father. He is a Rājā, a king, himself. He has grown grey in the business of political administration and government. He knows the laws of government and the basic principles of polity by actual practice of them spread over a life-time. And Janaka is not known to history as an imperial tyrant who trampled over the wishes of the people. In fact, he is a *Rājarṣi*, a royal sage, who commands metaphysical knowledge, who has convened many a philosophical symposium and whom philosophers like Yājñavalkya hold in high esteem. This unusual combination of political wisdom, born of long rule and practice of kingship, and philosophical wisdom that can penetrate through mundane matters and see the truth behind and beyond, that gives Janaka's angry criticism of Rāma a special weight and a significance. This precisely seems to be Bhavabhūti's point.

It is true that 'pleasing and placating the people' (*prajānurañjana, lokārādhana*), that is to say, government by the consent and to the satisfaction of the people, was always recommended as a worthy ideal for Imperial rulers in ancient India. It was a sort of spiritual curb on the unlimited power

of the monarch and a practical test of good and happy government. Conscientious kings no doubt aimed always at keeping their people happy under the banner of righteous rule. Kālidāsa's Duṣyanta, for instance, allowed himself to be exhausted in the service of the people at the cost even of his personal happiness. He looked upon his subjects as his own children; and the people too responded to his affectionate rule by looking upon him as their kinsman and brother. But even Duṣyanta's conduct does not show that he permitted himself to be swayed from his good political sense by the misconduct and vagaries of the people. Kālidāsa says that Duṣyanta held the rod of authority firmly in his hand to constrain the wayward and strove to put down all wrangles in his kingdom; for, after all, the king's first duty is to protect the weak and the innocent. (*ŚĀK* Act v, verses 5, 7, 8).

The error of Rāma lay in ignoring this aspect of the political philosophy taught in theory and practised by all goods kings, and in keeping an undue faith in the righteousness of the people. 'How could people be wicked?' he asks in angry exercise of kingly authority, when Durmukha who brought the news of public scandal to Rāma protests against Rāma's decision. A king is surely a father to his people. But Rāma apparently forgets that, like a father, he should love them and pardon their faults, but he must chastise them also when an occasion so demands. He must show the indulgence to listen to them; but he, as a king, cannot afford to be overpowered by their prattle; in the name of justice and fairplay and sound commonsense he must put his foot down and silence them, not his able and wise counsellors. This Rāma did not do. His fault is not his idealism but the one-sided view of his kingly responsibility that he took due to adminsitrative inexperience and lack of balanced political judgement. In trying to be fair, as he thought, to the people he perpetrated a grave injustice in the case of Sītā. Granting that the wishes of the people were supreme for Rāma and that in this regard he did not care for his wife, did not fairplay and justice demand that Rāma gave Sītā the status at least of a culprit and an opportunity to put up her personal defence? Surely, if Rāma did not choose to treat

Sītā as his loving wife he could have treated her as a citizen, as one of the subjects, and granted her the right to be heard when a serious moral charge was thrown against her. Did not Kālidāsa's Duṣyanta, for instance, confronted with a grave moral charge of betraying his wedded wife, throw his entire case before the pupils of Kaṇva, stating his own position in clear, unambiguous words and asking them to decide the course of action he should take? When Vasiṣṭha sends a message about the king's duty of keeping the people pleased, Rāma exclaims:

Sneham dayām ca saukhyam ca yadi vā Jānakīm api ।
Ārādhanāya lokasya muñcato nāsti me vyathā ॥ (i-12)

What a curious mixture of half-truths! In abandoning Sītā Rāma deliberately sacrificed his personal happiness, though this was in keeping with his idealism. But he sacrificed mercy as well. Mercy, if not the sense of justice, should have weighed with him before he abandoned Sītā in her very delicate condition. It was a cruel decision and Rāma becomes acutely aware of his cruelty, as the play shows. And as regards *sneha* Rāma is stating only a halftruth. He did not allow his love for his wife to come in the way of his decision. But he could never, never forsake this love, which becomes a burning memory and a living torture to him till the higher powers take mercy on him. And *nāsti me vyathā* is certainly not true : Rāma may conceal his pain from the prying eyes of the people; but the entire play is a witness to the fact that the heart of Rāma is like a boiling cauldron of sorrow.

It was necessary that Rāma realised the error political in taking the one-sided decision of abandoning Sītā without truly evaluating the truth and worth of public opinion and without giving Sītā a public opportunity of vindicating her character. It is not merely a personal issue. It is a question of justice which has a public aspect. In a so-called attempt to placate public opinion, a ruler cannot afford to be mercilessly unjust to another section of the people, even to a single citizen who matters in the case. An unbalanced judgement may undermine justice and, in fact, good govern-

ment. As a ruler and king Rāma must learn this plain lesson of political philosophy, lest he continued to take his political decisions emotionally and sentimentalize his action instead of rationalizing it. Acts iv to vii are constructed to serve this purpose.

It is presumable that Lava's criticism and Janaka's indignation are conveyed to Rāma somehow, so that he is enabled to look into his own conscience and review his actions. In fact, *a new awareness* seems to come to Rāma when we see him in the second Act after the passage of twelve years. His self-condemnation and hesitation in killing Śambūka show that Rāma has started doubting, if not questioning, the motives of demands made on him in the name of religious duty. And his cryptic remarks about the 'people' to Vāsantī in Act iii ('*sa eva jānāti kim api* ı') and to Lakṣmaṇa in Act vii ('*Śṛṇotu lokaḥ* ı') are eloquently suggestive of the unreasonableness of public opinion.

Yet, you must remember that it is not in the nature of Rāma to criticise his people or find fault with them. In fact, he is so lofty-minded that he apologizes to the absent people when he openly breaks down in Pañcavaṭī, And so, even the new awareness and the political lesson that Rāma has acquired would not make him take his decision back. The elders are keenly aware of this side of Rāma's nature. And that is why Bhavabhūti, with his his artistic perception, brings in the *garbhanāṭaka* in the final Act of the paly. The failure to understand the purpose of this dramatic device is a failure of art criticism. The *garbhanāṭaka* really serves three distinct purposes : It is, of course, a mode of bringing about the actual reunion of Rāma and Sītā. But this mode alone has been chosen by Bhavabhūti, and not any other, because the occasion of the play was the only opportunity of bringing the entire populace together. This was necessary because Rāma abandoned Sītā at the wishes of the people; if he would take her back, considering his nature, it would again be only at the wishes of the people. Hence, Arundhatī's appeal to the people with a view to understanding their wishes in the matter of accepting Sītā back in the royal family. This is the second purpose of the device. And the

third : the *garbhanāṭaka* is an attempt to do public justice to Sītā and enable her to vindicate her character. Rāma denied her this right. And therefore Bhavabhūti, with a sense of poetic justice, makes the author of the Rāmāyaṇa Vālmīki render unto Sītā what surely was her due.

You will see, thus, that the problem of the URC is a complex problem. The issue of *Sītā-tyāga* which is the life-spring of the drama has a double aspect : There is a private and personal aspect which concerns the mutual love of the husband and wife. This the poet has dealt with in the first three Acts and especially in the third Act. But there is a larger aspect which is public, social or political. It involves the concept of human justice and touches the responsibility of a king as a protector of the people and as a dispenser of justice. Bhavabhūti chose to deal with this aspect in the latter half of his play. And he did it with a perception and boldness which Art alone can muster. I submit that this interpretation of mine does explain adequately the entire design and structure of the play.

18

TWO PLAYS OF RĀMACANDRA : AN AESTHETIC STUDY

I

Nirbhaya-Bhīma-Vyāyoga

This one-act play* comes from the pen of the versatile Jaina writer who is reputed as an author of a hundred compositions. The play is built round an exploit of Bhīma and dramatises the episode of the killing of the demon Baka by Bhīma.

Rāmacandra's source is obviously the Mahābhārata.[1] But as a dramatist he had to shape the story a little differently to suit his dramatic design. It will be interesting to study the two versions to get an idea of the dramatist's art.

(i) The *Baka-vadha* episode in the epic occurs at a time when the Pāṇḍavas were living in hiding in the house of a Brahmin family in Ekacakrā city over which Baka had sway. The residents of the city had stipulated the surrender of one human being to serve the daily meal of the demon in order to prevent wholesale and indiscriminate slaughter of the human habitation.[2]

(ii) It is the turn of the Brahmin family to supply the daily victim and the household is distraught with the prospect

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**Nirbhaya-Bhīma Vyāyoga* (NBV) : edited by Pandit Hargovinddas and Pandit Bechardas ; Shri Yoshovijaya Granthamala, No. 19 ; Dharmabhyudaya Press, Varanasi; Veer era 2437 (1910 A.D.)

of death. The Brahmin's wife pleads that she should be allowed to go to meet the demon. Then the daughter does so. The Brahmin's little son too picks up a blade of grass from the floor and says with the daring and innocence of a child that he will kill the demon with it.[3]

(iii) As the debate in the Brahmin's house proceeds with uncertainty and indecision, Kunti, who had been listening to this tale of misery, decides to oblige the Brahmin in gratitude for the shelter and safety that he had given to the Pāṇḍavas.[4] The Pāṇḍava brothers are out at the moment for begging food, except Yudhiṣṭhira who had stayed with Kunti. She speaks to him about sending Bhīma to the demon to fulfil the Branmin's personal obligation. Yudhiṣṭhira opposes the idea. Kunti argues with him and convinces him that Bhīma will certainly kill the demon and do a good turn to the family too.[5]

(iv) The Pāṇḍava brothers return. Bhīma is told what he is to do. He collects the food willingly and goes out with it to meet the demon. This is the accepted practice to fulfil the demon's demand. The chosen victim carried the food collected for the demon and the demon ate it up along with the human victim. Bhīma goes to the forest residence of Baka, calls him out, and proceeds to eat up the food intended for the demon.[6]

(v) Baka is annoyed and attacks Bhīma. The final chapter describes their fight which ends in the death of Baka.

The Brahmin is grateful for being saved from the jaws of certain death. The people of the city throng to see the huge body of the demon stretched in death and wonder about it. The Brahmin explains, according to Kunti's suggestion, that an unknown Brahmin who had great mantra-power and physical prowess took pity on him and accomplished the demon's death.[7] The secret of the Pāṇḍavas staying *incognito* is thus preserved.

The changes that Rāmacandra has done in shaping his story will now be obvious on this background :

The dramatist does not make a pointed reference to the epic context, as probably unnecessary. But in the opening speeches of Bhīma and Draupadī there is a suggestion of the

epic background. Bhīma is sad at the thought that they are required to live in a forest, whereas they should have been in a palace. Draupadī is depressed in mind and feels that the Pāṇḍavas may not, after all, be able to defeat the Kauravas. These thoughts are completely forgotten in the course of the following dramatic development ; and so, the dramatist seems to have used these musings only as an epic anchor for his story.

The dramatist has changed the entire detail about the Pāṇḍavas and the Brahmin family. Kunti and the Brahmin family do not figure in the play. On the contrary, Draupadī who is not mentioned in the *Baka-vadha* episode takes a prominent place in the drama. The detail about the Pāṇḍavas having gone out for food is also omitted. In stead, the dramatist shows Bhīma taking Draupadī out for a pleasure stroll in the forest, and the other brothers are to follow him in due time.[8] This is a romantic opening fit for love or adventure ; and it is artistically conceived to the advantage of the hero.

With the omission of Kunti and the Brahmin family that hosted the Pāṇḍavas, the dramatist has to arrange the knowledge about Baka and his practice reaching Bhīma in a different way. This he does by using a plausible coincidence. As Bhīma and Draupadī move about in the forest admiring its luxuriant and impressive charm, they sight a temple priest who narrates the whole tale of Baka. This is a smooth introduction of the Baka episode and carries with it all the elements of dramatic expectation. Compared to the epic in which the Baka episode is just one incident, the narration here through an improvised new character comes more alive in its unexpectedness and because of the promise of dramatic development it holds. It is true that the scene is narrative; and the temple attendant has no further business in the drama. But it is a good dramatic device and the dramatist has planned it with a smooth and natural touch. Draupadī discovers that the forest grounds are muddy with flesh, blood and bones and imagines that they are probably near a cemetery.[9] Bhīma thinks otherwise. It is at this moment that Bhīma sees the temple attendant. His appearance on

the scene and his narration have therefore a realistic impact.

In the epic version Kunti takes the lead in helping the Brahmin family and is confident of Bhīma's prowess. Bhīma has the role only of a willing and obedient executor of a charge entrusted to him. In the dramatic version of Rāmacandra Bhīma takes the responsibility on his own initiative, although he is drawn into it by a coincidence.[10] This change definitely serves to heighten the stature of Bhīma, who appears here as humane and confident hero of a challenging adventure.

Yudhiṣṭhira and the other Pāṇḍava brothers are to follow Bhīma who has gone ahead with Draupadī in the forest. The arrival of the brothers, which has been carefully hinted earlier in the play, serves now several dramatic purposes. The timely arrival of Yudhiṣṭhira and the Pāṇḍavas at the very moment when Draupadī is planning suicide[11] provides the necessary turn in the dramatic story, relieves the tension in the situation and saves her life. Their presence on the stage at this point also fills the inevitable gap in dramatic action while Bhīma is fighting with Baka off-stage, and it serves to keep the story moving. It is natural in the dramatic construction that the note of confidence in Bhīma's prowess should be sounded by some brother if Kunti is not used for this purpose. Unexpectedly this role is assigned to Yudhiṣṭhira, probably as the eldest of the Pāṇḍavas. He asserts this confidence not only by positive statements but also by questioning Arjuna's move to run to Bhīma's help. Nakula and Sahadeva join their elder brother in support.[12] This conversation among the brothers helps naturally to assuage Draupadī's fears about the safety of Bhīma. The situation thus developed is, in a way, a dramatic anticipation of the end of the story. Finally, the presence of the Pāṇḍavas serves to provide the necessary audience for Bhīma's narration of the fight, and for bringing the finale of the dramatic story to a formal close.

Draupadī's inclusion in the Baka-vadha episode is an innovation on the part of the dramatist. Rāmacandra seems to have been goaded by a romantic motive in showing his hero perform in the very presence of the heroine. This enables

him to add colour to the heroic action and work out the usual feminine reactions also.

Rāmachandra has departed from the epic source in constructing the Brahmin episode which goads Bhīma to intervene. The dramatist does not show that Bhīma was acting at the behest of Kunti to oblige the Brahmin family who had given them shelter during the period of their secret stay. This detail is altogether omitted. In the play, the Brahmin whom Bhīma meets is a stranger to him; and the meeting also is a chance occurrence. Bhīma's gesture to help the family in their danger from Baka appears therefore to be quite spontaneuos and worthy of a hero.

But the omission of the touching rivalry to die for the family among the members, which we notice in the epic story, is difficult to understand. The rivalry deepens the tragic note in the plight of the family and, at the same time, heightens the dignity of the members as human beings. Bhāsa uses this episode, though in altered context, in his *Madhyama-vyāyoga* with a superb dramatic effect.

Rāmacandra is apparently concerned with a picture of normal pathos and introduces only the mother and the wife of the victim. There is no doubt that they are terribly affected ; but they have accepted also the fact of inevitable death. The attendant sorrow is genuine; but it is indicative of the familiar frailty of human beings. Rāmacandra uses certain descriptive touches in constructing this incident : The Brahmin is dressed as a victim of death; his body is anointed with red sandal; a garland of red flowers hangs down from his neck; his hair are loose; his steps slow. He mounts tearfully the slab of stone from which he is supposed to be devoured by the demon. His young wife has put on all her ornaments, suggesting thereby that she will follow her husband in death like a Satī. These touches clearly show that Rāmacandra has used Śrī Harṣa's *Nāgānanda* for his model in constructing this scene.

With the change in constructing the Brahmin episode, it is natural that the dramatist should change the mode in which the demon was to meet his intended victim. Obviously the precepts of dramaturgy have weighed on the mind of the

dramatist and directed his treatment. The violence involved in the demon attacking his victim and feasting on it, as also the actual fight between Bhīma and Baka culminating in the demon's slaughter, could not be shown on the stage. Bhāsa takes the freedom of art in showing violence and death on the stage, contrary to Bharata's prescription. Rāmacandra adheres to representation sanctioned by convention and dramatic practice. In the play, the victim is to take his seat on the stone-slab from which he is lifted and carried away to the mountain fortress of the Baka. Accordingly. when Bhīma substitutes himself for the victim, attempts are made to lift him away; and though Baka appears on the scene to supervise, as it were, the usual arrangements, the actual flight takes place near the mountain fortress, behind the scene.

Since the actual epic context has not been used by the dramatist, it was not necessary for him to mention the final detail in the epic story of preserving the secret about the stay in hiding of the Pāṇḍavas. The play therefore ends appropriately with Bhīma's narration of Baka-vadha and the gratitude of the man whose life has been saved.

Rāmacandra's handling of the entire episode shows that he has the imaginative inventiveness of a literary artist and the sense of freedom in shaping his dramatic story. The omission of the actual epic context of the Baka episode, which was not really necessary for dramatization, has gained for the play a completeness of a single individual episode that can be easily assumed to have occurred in the colourful and adventurous life of Bhīma. The reader is not required to depend on the epic for the antecedents or for the consequent explanations to understand the dramatic story. This bestows unity on the play, which becomes a one-act, as it was intended to be.

The omission of the Brahmin's story in the epic is, however, an artistic loss. Rāmacandra has compensated for it partly by describing the wailings of the two women relative of the victim and partly by working out elaborately the reactions of Draupadī who is present throughout the dramatic action. The visual detail about the victim's

appearance is likely to add to the grimness of the scene in a stage representation.

But Rāmacandra's great skill lies, to my mind, in the altered picture of Bhīma's confrontation with Baka. Conscious that the encounter cannot be shown on the stage, the dramatist builds a picture of the demon's mountain fortress to which the victim was to be carried. He introduces Baka and his demon attendants on the scene. The attendants sense a new kind of smell on the grounds; they search and discover Draupadī hiding behind mango tree. These details are interesting and dramatic. They create action and tension. The demon attendants lick Draupadī and discover to their intense delight that her flesh is tender and savoury. This again is a natural touch and produces humour of a grim kind. Such grim humour is present in their further recommendation to their Chief to eat Draupadī first, or taste her flesh in between meal, or their request that they be allowed to feast on her flesh.[13] The dramatist succeeds, for a moment, in mixing *bībhatsa* with *hāsya* and, at the same time, suggesting the underlying *bhayānaka* and *karuṇa* through the psychological reactions of Draupadī. This little scene is quite exciting. And the excitement continues in the attempts on the part of the demon attendants to lift Bhīma from the stone-slab and their failure. The frustration of the demons is very enjoyable to the audience : It is a tribute to Bhīma's formidable strength. It is also apt to evoke pleasure and laughter at the sight of the discomfiture of the demon.

It appears to me therefore that the dramatist's construction of the Baka episode, although it deviates from the original, has succeeded in presenting a unified, self-containing picture which is colourful with heroism, pathos, excitement and grim laughter.

It is in creating the characters, however, that the dramatist's departure from the epic source appears to be questionable : It does not fulfil any special dramatic purpose. In the altered context the initiative and the finish of the dramatic action rest with Bhīma. This is a gain for the hero's character, as said earlier. But in being required to make Bhīma assert his own invincible might before Draupadī and narrate the

finish of the fight with Baka himself, as forced by the dramatic design, the dramatist could not save Bhīma from looking like a boastful giant, somewhat like the Bhīma in Bhaṭṭa Nārāyaṇa's *Veṇīsaṁhāra*. Yudhiṣṭhira's cock-sureness about Bhīma's prowess is inconsistent with his epic image; and his slighting rejoinder to Arjuna in order to stop him from rushing to assist Bhīma is uncalled-for. But it is Draupadī's picture that seems to have suffered the most at the hand of the dramatist. Her note of defeatism is inconsistent with her supposed independent and fiery temperament.[14] It is strange that she holds Bhīma back from interfering with the demon's activities.[15] Her anxiety for Bhīma is natural; any wife will feel such concern for the safety of her husband; but the concern is better expressed after a heroic decision has been taken, not before. Bhīma is a different type of man; and Draupadī also is the daughter and the wife of a Kṣatriya. Her attempt, therefore, to drag Bhīma away from the distress of the Brahmin family and her suggestion to run away from it are unworthy of the spirited lady in agony that we know her to be from the epic and other literary compositions. Her attempt to commit suicide[16] is equally ridiculous. It suggests that she has no confidence in Bhīma. It also shows that she is an ordinary female who is guided only by the thought of self-preservation and who loses her perspective by the slightest threat to it. I think, Rāmacandra fell a victim to the temptation of painting Draupadī on the lines of the familiar heroine of a Sanskrit Court Comedy. Mālavikā and Ratnāvalī are similarly afraid to permit any unexpected adventure to their heroes and are ready to attempt suicide at the mere idea of frustration and loss of the lover. But such a treatment of Draupadī's character is unjustified and also inartistic.

Strangely enough Baka makes a better, albeit un-demonaic, impression on the mind of the reader in his strict adherence to the stipulated conditions and in his courtesy towards a woman.[17] However, this touch of dignity and culture bestowed on the demon is wasted; because Baka is not given an opportunity to converse with Bhīma on the stage, before the final encounter rings the curtain down on his life.

Luckily, Rāmacandra writes with a sense of drama. His prose dialogue has a natural flow; it is not riddled with heavy compounds or encumbered with poetic conceits. His verses also are generally simple, except when they are used for descriptions or for suggesting the heroic sentiment.[18]

Incidentally the play conforms to formal requirements. A *Vyāyoga*, according to definition,[19] is a one-act built round a famous hero, with fewer women and more male characters. The incident is a conflict occasioned by some kind of rivalry and involves actual fighting and wrestling. This makes the play a heroic one; other sentiments come into it only as a support. The development of the dramatic action is compact and does not exceed the duration of a day.

Bhīma who dominates the play qualifies as a *prakhyāta nāyaka* without being either a divinity or a royal sage. Draupadī and the victim's wife and mother are the only female characters. The Pāṇḍavas, Baka and his demon attendants, the temple priest and the victim make up the larger number of male characters. There is of course a conflict in the play due to confrontation with Baka and the rivalry is engendered by Bhīma's interference on behalf of the intended victim. There is some rough handling of characters, especially of Bhīma, although the main fight takes place off-stage. The emotions of pathos, fear, disgust and laughter are incidental to the heroic. The play begins presumably in the morning; the stroll and the presence of the temple attendant indicate this; the action is over by meal time. The duration of the play does not exceed therefore a few hours.

II

Nalavilāsa-nāṭaka

The *Nalavilāsa-Nāṭaka** is a dramatic rendering in seven acts of the Nala-Damayanti-kathā. The legend of Nala is

**Nalavilāsa Nāṭaka* (NV) : edited by G.K. Shrigondekar and Lalchand B. Gandhi, Gaekwad's Oriental Series (GOS), No. XXIX, Baroda, 1926.

wellknown and familiar to all Indian readers. It is needless to compare the dramatic version of Rāmachandra with the prototype as reeorded and preserved in the Mahābhārata.[20] Besides, one of the editors, Pandit Lalchand B. Gandhi has noticed the principal differences in the *Nalakathā* as presented in the different versions.[21]

The Jain version of the story differs from the Mahābhārata mainly in four respects (i) It omits the presence of four gods who attended the *svayaṁvara*, assuming the identity of Nala, so that Damayantī was confronted with five persons who looked exactly like Nala. (ii) The temptation to indulge in the game of dice and the subsequent misery of Nala, which are attributed to the malice of Kali in the epic version, are changed in the Jain version. (iii) The transformation of Nala which completely disguises his real identity is, in the epic story, due to Karkoṭaka Nāga who bites Nala. The Jain version substitutes Nala's own father, now a divine being, who helps Nala through his calamity. (iv) The separated Damayantī, in the epic story, becomes aware of Nala's whereabouts by partaking the animal meat cooked by him. The Jain version uses the motive of *Sūrya pāka-vidyā* which Nala alone is supposed to know. It is obvious that Rāmacandra uses the Jain version as a base for his dramatic story. He has also effected many other small changes in introducing new motives and characters to suit the dramatic form imposed on the old legend.

The prologue, called *āmukha*, introduces the poet and his play and strikes the main note in the story of Damayantī's desertion by Nala through a parallel occurrence in the life of the Naṭī. She is worried because her married daughter has been driven out of the house by the husband. The Sūtradhāra takes a philosophic view of the happening and feels confident that the daughter will be reunited with her husband if she were really above blame. This conversation serves to foreshadow the denouement of the play.

The main scene of the first act introduces King Nala with his usual palace attendants. A Kāpālika has been captured. With him is discovered a letter addressed to one king Citrasena by some Meṣamukha, and also a picture of a lovely damsel.

It is recognised that the Kāpalika is a spy; though the contents of the letter remain as yet a mystery. The lady in in the picture is a 'jewel of a woman,' and she is wearing a string of pearls (*muktāvalī*) which is suprisingly identical with what Nala had seen in a dream the same morning. The coincidence strengthens the prophecy by the King's astrologers that the King will have a beautiful woman and great prosperity. The apparent mystery about the picture is solved by a palace maid Makarikā who belongs to Kuṇḍinapura and who is therefore in a position to identify the picture as that of Damayantī, the daughter of the Vidarbha king. Nala is very much enamoured of the Vidarbha Princess whom he had considered, from the picture, to be a *devatā*. He is also angry with the Kāpālika whom he orders to be thrown in prison.

The first act is thus intended to introduce Damayantī and create in Nala's mind an attraction for her. This is accomplished by a new, though familiar, motive of a dream and by the introduction of a picture through a captured spy. The author creates a mystery at the beginning of his story which he resolves at the end, obviously to maintain suspense in the unfolding of his dramatic plot.

The spy episode has dropped a hint about the possible opposition to Nala's amorous intentions. This is pursued partly in the second act. Nala has sent his trusted companion Kalahaṁsa, along with Makarikā, to the Vidarbha kingdom, armed with Nala's own picture and of Damayanti seized from the spy, in order to learn Damayantī's personal reactions. The emissaries play their part cleverly, gain access to Damayantī, and bring important news back. They relate to Nala that the Vidarbha king Bhīmaratha is under the influence of a Kāpālika by name Ghoraghoṇa and his wife Lambastanī. The Kāpālika is a master of ruthless deceipt,[22] and apparently in league with the Kalachuri king Citrasena. He has forced on the mind of Bhīmaratha that Damayantī will be Citrasena's wife, and the Vidarbha King has accepted this behest. This is depressing news for Nala. But the interview with Damayantī which Kalahaṁsa and Makarikā had obtained is full of promise. Damayantī did not disclose

her mind completely. But she accepted both the pictures and directed that her picture be sent to her father, and that of Nala be kept in the palace temple. Kalahaṁsa thinks that this is indicative of Damayantī's aeceptance of Nala. Damayantī further suggests that Nala should try to win over Lambastanī to his side somehow, because she is capable of influencing her father in changing his mind. Kalahaṁsa has played his part more than well; he has brought Lambastanī with him to meet Nala. Nala humours her, asks the Vidūṣaka not to make fun of her, and requests her to help him. She promises to get the Vidarbha princess for Nala and Nala, in return, awards her gold ornaments to cover her entire body. While thc dramatist thus furthers the story and indicates the overcoming of an apparent obstacle to the lovers' union, the news at the end of the act that the captured spy has been befriended by Yuvarāja Kūbara, the younger brother of Nala, suggests a new threat to the happiness of the lovers.

Damayantī's gesture in sending her picture to her father has proved to be a wise move. In the course of investigating how the picture went to Niṣadhā, King Bhīmaratha discovered that the dreaded Kāpālika Ghoraghoṇa was a spy of Citrasena and the spy caught by Nala was his follower. This discovery sets his mind against the Kāpālika. He inflicts a humiliation on him and his wife and drives the couple out of his kingdom. He also orders the *svayaṁvara* of Damayantī, to which Nala receives a due invitation.[23]

The way is thus prepared for the union of Nala and Damayantī, the only obtacle of Citrasena through the machinations of Ghoraghoṇa being now completely removed. What is expected is the solemnization of this union. The dramatist, however, uses the third act to bring the hero and the heroine together in a scene of love, in the best tradition of the classical playwrights. The day before the *svayaṁvara*, Damayantī comes to the Cupid's temple to offer her worship; and Nala is given an opportunity to stand behind a mango tree to watch her, to hear her, and to admire her. The helpmates of Nala are close at hand to interpret Damayantī's gestures for Nala and to prevail upon her to disclose her mind. Nala is in raptures over the lovelines of Damayantī, and is

able to hold her hand in an attempt to stop her picking the flowers herself. Nala also submits to her, through Kalahaṁsa, a letter of love. Damayantī has given enough indications of her mind without actually divulging anything or without committing herself. This apparent one-sided meeting is interrupted by Damayantī's mother calling her away. The Vidūṣaka brays like a donkey; Damayantī returns to avoid a bad omen. She then drops a letter in the hand of the Vidūṣaka, promises Nala to meet the next day, and finally departs. The letter is a confession of her love for Nala. But it also suggests a separation.[24] The confession of mutual love completes the preparation for union. But the mixed note of union and possible separation augurs a coming turn of events. And this is overshadowed by the news that Ghoraghoṇa and his wife have joined Nala's brother Kūbara.

The fourth act presents thescene of the *svayaṁvara*. It is really unnecessary after the mutual avowal of love. It is probably introduced as the only way for showing a formal union; and this is, incidentally, in keeping with the old legend, as with the declared intention of the Vidarbha King.

The scene is no doubt modelled on Kālidāsa's Indumatī-*svayaṁvara*. It has no dramatic value, because any surprise or unexpected turn is already prevented by the omission of the gods' rivalry which was an important part of the old legend, by checking, for the time being at least, Citrasena's plot to get Damayantī for himself, and by the fact that Damayantī had made up her mind about Nala. The scene has therefore only a spectacular value. There is, no doubt, some good poetry in this act; and the psychological tremors of Nala through the scene are convincingly shown. But the repetition involved in the introduction of suitors, inevitable though, cannot be called dramatic, as the final outcome is known to the audience. There are also some elements in the scene that are difficult to explain. What is the point in showing that the presentation of the suitors took such a long time as to trespass on the auspicious hour fixed for the marriage?[25] If the usher, Mādhavasena, was inordinately talkative, as Damayantī feels and Bhīmaratha openly alleges, why was he chosen for this work?[26] As a matter of fact, it

is his duty to introduce every king properly. He is no more talkative than the minister Vasudatta in fact is, who loves to describe Damayantī's charms to her own father ![27] Damayantī's own tarrying also, when she finally stands before Nala, is difficult to explain. If the dramatist was planning to create a last-minute suspense, it was useless; because the audience did never expect Damayantī to turn away from Nala. It is equally puzzling why the king, and subsequently the minister, should impose upon Damayantī and openly recommend to her and instruct her to choose Nala if this were *svayaṁvara*?[28].

The act comes to a close with the bard's announcement of the time of the day. The imagery used by him in his verse unmistakably suggests the coming temptation of dice play and the desertion of the bride,[29] the shadow of the future event.

This information is given to the audience at the beginning of act V in a longish monologue of Kalahaṁsa. In spite of the earnest advice of the family priest and wise citizens, and probably acting under the spell of fate operating from previous birth,[30] Nala gambled away his own kingdom and Damayantī. Having lost everything to Prince Kūbara, Nala is preparing to leave his country till his good fortune returned.

The dramatist works out the expected atmosphere of pathos out of this situation. The citizens are plunged into misery. The faithful attendant Kalahaṁsa and the merry companion, the Vidūṣaka, wish to accompany Nala and are ready to die otherwise. Damayantī insists on going with Nala; and, very much like Sītā in the Rāmāyaṇa, argues and pleads with Nala to take her with him. Nala has to do so.

The wanderings of the lone couple are then described with appropriate stress on Damayantī's tiredness, her agony of over-powering thirst, and her slow weeping, till they meet with a Tāpasa. The conversation leads to Nala's present condition and the purpose of his journey. The Tāpasa, who is the same Lambodara, the spy and servant of Kāpālika, now disguised, advises Nala that the state of the 'loss of kingdom and being tied down to a woman' is a calamity

heaped on calamity; the company of a woman is bound to destroy a man's freedom of movement. The Tāpasa gives voluntary advice to Nala that his going to the Vidarbha kingdom and the shelter of his father-in-law will be embarrassing and shameful to him in his present plight.[31] Nala accepts both the observations of the ascetic. He fetches water for Damayantī and points out to her the way to Kuṇḍinapura as learnt from the ascetic. In his own mind he has decided to abandon Damayantī.

Damayantī has a feeling of premonition about her desertion. But she is overpowered with fatigue and sleep. And as she is lost in sleep Nala deserts her, with almost the same emotional tension and verbal expression as Bhavabhūti's Rāma displayed when he decided to abandon Sītā who had gone to sleep on his arm. The self-reproach, the awareness of cruelty and the inward sorrow of Nala are overwhelmingly similar to those of Rāma. Damayantī is still drugged with sleep when Nala leaves her. A traveller from a passing caravan sees her, alone and lost, lifts her and carries her away to safety.

The act is thus intended to depict the circumstances and the actual act of Damayantī's abandonment. The loss of kingdom in the game of dice is a detail which is part of the old legend. But the motive in the old legend, namely, the spirit of Kali taking possession of the mind and body of Nala which is responsible for Nala's headlong surrender to the game of dice and also for his desertion of his wife, is omitted in the dramatic version and substituted by the idea of fate working against Nala. There cannot be anything objectionable in the change of motive. But it is likely to be too spacious a cloak to cover the actions of a character, if they cannot be explained also on the normal grounds of a mans's character and behaviour. This is what happens here and consequently the characterization of Nala suffers. Nala has an instinctive suspicion about the Tāpasa. He sees his resemblance to the earlier spy Lambodara. And yet, the mere change in appearance, that the Tāpasa is lame, a hunchback, is shown to be enough to remove the suspicion from Nala's mind[32]. Similarly, instead of being a little wary, Nala shows

himself to be utterly gullible in accepting all the statements of the Tāpasa. It is reasonable to suppose that Nala would feel humiliation in facing his father-in-law in the present situation. But why should he accept the suggestion of abandoning his wife ? The answers to all these questions have to be taken from the idea of fate. But fate does not work with such a thin disguise as that of a suspicious Tāpasa. The roots of man's behaviour must reach down his basic character and temper as moulded by heredity and the law of Karma. Or else, an outside factor must act with such a compulsion that a person loses his sense of perspective and judgement under the sudden impact. Both these factors operate together in the case of Rāma. His decision to abandon Sītā is as much a stroke of cruel fate as it is the result of his idealistic temperament. The dramatist does not attempt anything of the kind. And so, the act of Damayantī's abandonment does not bring conviction, although the emotion of Nala is genuine.

The fifth act has left the audience in a state of suspense and tension, full of dramatic value. The dramatist picks up his thread of narration with a very clever device in the sixth act. A long soliloquy of Nala first informs the audience of the physical transformation of Nala due to the intervention of his father appearing in the guise of a serpent, of the advice and promise of returning fortune, of Nala's stay with Dadhiparṇa, the lord of Ayodhyā, as a royal cook. The audience also learns about a dramatic performance which a troupe of actors from Vidharbha is to present to the King.

It is through this device of a play within the play (*Garbhāṅka*) that the dramatist provides the links of story development. It looks quite probable that the dramatist, once again is imitating Bhavabhūti's handling of the Rāma-kathā in the *Uttara-Rāma-carita*, with a touch from Kālidāsa's *Vikramorvaśīya* in depicting Damayantī's search for her lost husband. The imitation does not, however, take away the dramatic value of the *garbhāṅka* : First, it is a picturesque and spectacular mode of presenting to the audience the knowledge about what happened to Damayantī after Nala left her. Her futile search for Nala naturally led

to an attempt at suicide. But we learn that she was saved and was entrusted to the care of a caravan of merchants. Secondly, the dramatic performance before the King of Ayodhyā is obviously intended to bring to Nala the knowledge of Damayantī's safety and her probable stay in her father's house. The explicit details are given in the final act of the play where we know that Damayantī had become aware that Nala was living in Ayodhyā and had therefore deliberately arranged the dramatic show to bring him out in the open. But here the fact that the troupe has come from Vidarbha to Ayodhyā and also the fact that the show is concerned with the desertion of Damayantī by Nala are sufficiently suggestive of an underlying purpose. The *garbhāṅka* is thus an artistic attempt to establish a definite link between the separated couple and to create the possibilities of their reunion. Thirdly, the *garbhāṅka* is also expected to confirm the presence of Nala in the royal house at Ayodhyā. It was expected that Nala would somehow attend the dramatic performance. In fact, he is actually invited to do so by the King. It was also expected that Nala would be profoundly affected by the show. And so Nala is. The dramatist works out the pathos in the situation leading to the climax of Damayantī's suicide. King Dadhiparṇa is deeply moved by Damayantī's loyalty to her husband, her sense of a chaste wife's duty and dignity, the immoral cruelty of Nala in deserting his wife, and deep sorrow which shrouds the whole play. The King is so moved as to be carried away by the performance and forget that it was only a dramatic spectacle. If the play could affect the King so much, it is easy to see that Nala would be moved out of his depth and would betray his disguise. This is exactly what happens during the performance. It is only the transformation of Nala resulting in incredible ugliness and a little resourcefulness on Nala's own part[33] that save the complete revelation of Nala's real personality for the time being. But Nala is unable to check himself at the sight of Damayantī's suicide; and King Dadhiparṇa questions him on his real identity.[34] The actors and those who were at the back of the show could therefore be presumed to have been convinced about

Nala's whereabouts. The presumption is corroborated, in a way, by the invitation to attend Damayantī's *svayaṁvara* the next morning, presented by a messenger from the Vidarbha King.

This, as we learn later, is a clever plan of Damayantī to bring out Nala in the open. The invitation forces Nala to throw away his disguise and display another peculiar skill that he alone possessed, namely of being able to drive the horses swifter than wind, which will enable the King and Nala to cover the distance of a hundred *yojanas* in one night in order to be present at the *svayaṁvara*, and also help Nala in preventing Damayantī's second marriage. It is on this note that the sixth act ends.

The *garbhāṅka* has proved to be an excellent device to serve a number of significant dramatic purposes. Its poetic and dramatic value can be easily admitted. The only weak element that appears in this construction is the reason for the presence of Nala at the performance. The presence was absolutely necessary for the development of the drama. But the dramatist has not succeeded in making it realistic, compelling and convincing. King Dadhiparṇa is said to have been impressed by the varied skill of Nala.[35] But after all, he was living with the King as his cook. How much condescension can the King show to a cook? And how much freedom of reaction and utterance can the cook have in royal presence? Apparently, both the King and Nala express their reactions and exchange explanations as if the ugly Bāhuka were an honoured guest of the King! The dramatist should have provided an additional motive, than the mere dramatic necessity, to make Nala's presence at the show and his verbal exchanges with the King more probable and convincing. Our knowledge that Bāhuka is Nala in disguise is no explanation why King Dadhiparṇa should behave with him on so informal and friendly terms, when he knows him only as a skilled cook, who may be an expert in some other arts too. The social status of the King and the cook are different. The presence of Nala at the show cannot be explained on any plausible ground and remains therefore a very weak link-in the dramatic construction.

The final act gathers up the threads of the narration, offers explanations for events and happenings that have occurred, and brings about the reunion of Nala and Damayantī. It becomes now evident that the dramatic show was planned by Damayantī herself and she was helped by Nala's associates Kalahaṁsa and the Vidūṣaka in getting certain news about Nala.[36] The *svayaṁvara* was another clever ruse to bring Nala to the Vidarbhas.

The dramatist creates final suspense by opening the seventh act on a scene of Damayantī's act of *Sati*. It appears that Citrasena's machinations and Ghoraghoṇa's wily bluff are still not over. They have spread a rumour of Nala's death; and Damayantī has resolved to throw herself on a burning pyre in an act of self-immolation to follow her husband in death. This shocking end is prevented by the timely arrival of Nala. The occasion gives Nala an opportunity also to test Damayantī's love and fidelity. Nala then changes his appearance according to the instructions of his father and become his true self to the joy of every one. The reunion is now literally accomplished. The happiness is enhanced by the complete exposure of the plot of the wicked Ghoraghoṇa, and by the bestowal of the Vidarbha kingdom on Nala by Damayantī's parents. Getting Damayantī back safe as his loving wife was enough happiness for Nala. The gift of the kingdom is, in his own words, 'like whitewashing the lily, perfuming the monsoon shower, and cooling the moon'.[37] It is on this poetic note that the play comes to a close after the formal epilogue.

It appears that the dramatist probably wanted to save the final act from being rather tame; and so he added the scene of Damayantī's *Sati* to make it colourful and tense. The suspense and tension are obviously there in the situation. Only we must not question how every one, including Damayantī, are so easily taken in by travellers' tales[38], especially when they had learnt earlier once of the machinations of the Kāpālika, and when Damayantī had all the resources of the kingdom at her command to check up and verify such an important and shocking news of the death of her husband before she surrendered to a precipitate action.

We must not also ask how Kalahaṁsa and Vidūṣaka, if they were present with the performing troupe in Ayodhyā, managed to arrive in Kuṇḍinapura even before the swifter-than-wind Nala.

Looking at the play as a whole it becomes evident that the dramatist has used three junctures in the Nala-Damayantī legend to shape his dramatic version as a serious comedy of royal love. In the *Nalavilāsa Nāṭaka* it is a story of romantic union, unfortunate separation and happy reunion. The dramatist omits the part played by the swan in the old legend, as obviously unsuitable for dramatic representation. In stead, the plot engineered by king Citrasena with the help of spies to win Damayantī's hand serves a double purpose : that of introducing the necessary obstacle for the development of love, and also for bringing Damayantī and Nala psychologically together. Other factors, like Nala's dream, the willing assistance given by his associates in love, and the occasion of *svayaṁvara* which enables a prior meeting of the lovers, all help to strengthen the union of love. The dramatist yet builds a love scene, familiar from the classical plays, to bring a conviction of mutual and reciprocal love before the union in marriage takes place. This was not quite necessary for this story; because Damayantī was going to choose her husband in a *svayaṁvara* and the fact of mutual attraction was sufficient for the choice. The dramatist is obviously tempted to imitate the classical authors and show his ability in depicting *śṛṅgāra*. The scene of the *svayaṁvara* itself lacks dramatic value because of the earlier love scene, and also due to the omission of the legendary motive of conflict. However, the dramatic development upto the union is sufficiently poetic and interesting.

It is the motive of separation that has not been convincingly worked out. The dramatist has used the machinations of the Kāpālika as a central element of conflict throughout the play. But it is surprising how the characters who are temporary victims of these machinations do not become wise or wary even after the exposure of the spies. The author's explanation probably will be that they are also victims of an adverse fate. But this, as said earlier, is too

spacious a reason to explain the actual actions of the dramatic characters. The action of Nala in abandoning Damayantī, her curious hesitation to choose Nala at the time of the *svayaṁvara* and her rash and unreasonable act of *Satī* are all melodramatic, but psychologically unconvincing.

III

Rāmacandra seems to have been inspired to build his plays on the classical model. The influence of the master is unmistakable. The romantic love scene, in the *Nalavilāsa Nāṭaka*, is like any scene that a reader could find in the plays of Kālidāsa, Śri Harṣa or Bhavabhūti. The *svayaṁvara* scene will remind us of Kālidāsa's *Raghuvaṁśa*. The scene of Damayantī's abandonment is inspired by Bhavabhūti's *Uttara-Rāma-carita*. Nala's soliloquy is reminiscent of the speech of Rāma. Even his earlier utterances in the love scene and his soliloquy after the desertion of his wife are similar to those of Bhavabhūti's Rāma and Mādhava.[39] Damayantī's search for Nala is like the search of Purūravas for Urvaśī in the *Vikramorvaśīya*, the reference to the lion being new and added possibly to emphasise Damayantī's chaste character and for an obvious theatrical effect. And if the device of a *garbhāṅka* is already used by Harṣa or Bhavabhūti, the scene of the act of *satī* very much resembles the attempt of Draupadī and Yudhiṣṭhira, in the *Veṇīsaṁhāra*, to burn themselves under similar circumstances of a perverse report about Bhīma's death by a demon spy.

This is not to suggest that Rāmacandra's composition is marred by imitation. He imitates masters; and who could resist such a temptation ? The real weakness of Sanskrit compositions is rooted in the overpowering theory of *rasa* which was mistakenly applied by many a writer. While it was intended that all elements in a literary and dramatic composition should converge on the principal *rasa*, these writers *subordinated* every element and regarded it as only a means to depict a *rasa*. The subtle difference between the two positions of the theory was either not understood or not

properly appreciated. Rāmacandra himself says :

> "A picturesque variety of incidents (and styles) should not deserve so much praise in a dramatic composition as Rasa ought to : a beautifully ripened mango would cause annoyance if it were to lack the flavour of the juice."[40]

This is of course true. But the representation of emotion as the principal content (*rasa*) cannot mean that characters and events in a play have to be only conventional wooden frames to accommodate pictures of emotion. The classical masters never made this mistake. They stressed emotional experience, used a variety of sentiments ; but at the same time did not allow the individuality of characters to be lost in the rhetorical flow of sentiments or the casual links and motivation of actions and events to be covered by the doubtful glamour of poetry and florid language. It is in this respect that Rāmacandra's plays appear to be weak. Some of his motivation is not fully convincing ; and so, his characterization suffers. The principal characters in his plays appear to have no will of their own. They seem to lack perspective and judgment. The minor characters are usually built on conventional lines and hardly any one of them would linger in our memory.

At the same time it must be made clear that Rāmacandra appears a lesser artist only in comparison with the masters. He has enough sense of drama to build scenes that have emotional interest and dramatic tension. He has an eye for dramatic construction too ; though his casual links are weak or unconvincing sometimes. In the *Nalavilāsa*, for example, he builds every act round an important event cleverly planned; and closes it with an indication of the coming development in the following act, or with the announcement of the time of the day ; although he did not choose to suggest the interval of twelve years between the separation and reunion (acts V to VII) as Bhavabhūti does so masterly in the *Uttara-Rāma-carita*.

Rāmacandra is also a good poet. His language, though rhetorical in the full-length play, has an easy flow. His imagery, though not always original, is sufficiently poetical.[41]

Occasionally he can handle language, like Bhavabhūti, to produce not only a picturesque effect but also a charming conflict of emotions. Compare the following :[42]

आकुञ्चितैर्विकसितैश्चकितैः प्रहृष्टै-
रुत्कण्ठितैः कुटिलितैर्ललितैर्विनीतैः ।
आलोकितैर्मृगदृशो वदनप्रवृत्ति-
वृत्तैर्जितोऽस्मि मुषितोऽस्मि हृतोऽस्मि तुल्यम् ।।

or, तदिदमनिशं स्मारं स्मारं कुशीलववन्मनो
हसति रमते रोदित्युच्चैर्विषीदति सीदति ।।

He can build a verse using simple sentences or producing the structure of many compound clauses : Compare, for instance,[43]

तातस्त्वं मम, रक्षको मम, मम त्वं नायकः पालकः
पाल्योऽहं तव, किङ्करस्तव, तव प्रेष्यो भुजिष्यश्च ते ।
भूत्वा शान्तिपरः प्रपद्य करुणां रक्षःकृतान्तास्यगं
मां त्रायस्व, पुषाण मां, शमय मां, मां रक्ष, मां प्रीणय ।।

And गुरुवपुरिति चित्रं वीरमानीति दर्पं
बलितम इति खेदं यो रिपूणां चकार ।।

The dramatic sense and the poetic ability of Rāmacandra place him, in my opinion, much above the playwrights of the decadent period of the Sanskrit drama whose compositions continually slip in the unrestrained rhetoric and verbosity of their own making. For a Jaina writer trained in the religious and philosophical traditions this achievement in the sphere of art is worthy of praise.

References

1. Mahābhārata (MBH), Ādiparvan, chapters 145-152, Critical Edition (Cr. Ed.) Bhandarkar Oriental Research Insitute, Poona (BORI), Vol. I.
2. *Ibid*, ch. 145.
3. *Ibid*, chs. 146, 147; see esp. 147, verse 22.
4. *Ibid*, chs. 148-149.

5. *Ibid*, ch. 150.
6. *Ibid*, ch. 151.
7. *Ibid*, ch. 152; see verses 14-17.
8. NBV Prologue, p. 2 :
(नेपथ्ये भीमः) वत्स अर्जुन, यावत् पाञ्चाल्याः काननकमनीयतां दर्शयामस्तावत् त्वया गाण्डीवयोगमाधाय महाराजेन सह शीघ्रमागन्तव्यम् ।
9. NBV, p. 4 :
नाध, जधा एदाओ अट्ठिपिसिदसोणिदपिच्छलाओ भूमीओ तधा जाणे मसाणुद्देसो एसो, ता अन्नत्थ वच्चामो ।
10. NBV, p. 7-8 ; cf.
भीमः-देवि, पर्याप्तमिदानीमन्यत्रगमनेन, रक्षामि साम्प्रतमवश्यमुपहारपुरुषं निर्दलितदोःस्थामाभिमानाद् जातुधानात् । cf. also v. 10.
11. NBV, p. 14. cf.
द्रौपदी-(क्षणं विमृश्य) किमेदिणा अरन्नरुदिदेण, ता एदंमि सहयारे उल्लंबिय वावाएमि अप्पाणम् ।...(लतापाशे कण्ठं बध्नाति ।)
12. NBV, pp. 14-15. cf. for Yudhiṣṭhira's confident attitude vv. 18-19 ; and the following :
अर्जुनः—यदि समादिशति देवः तदाहमार्यं भीमसेनमनुसरामि । राजा-(सरोषम्) भीमोऽप्यपरसाहायिकः पराभूतयेऽपेक्ष्यते ।
for the assurance of Nakula and Sahadeva, cf. vv. 20, 21.
13. NBV, pp. 12-13. Read :
सूकरः—भट्टा, एसा इत्थिका लद्धा ता पढमं एदं भक्खेदु सामी । ...(द्रौपदीमाघ्राय जिह्वाग्रेण आलिह्य च) भट्टा, अदिपेशलाइं एदाए मंससोणिदाइं ता अंतला २ एसावि भक्खियदु । .. राक्षसो—यशेवं या अम्हे भक्खिस्सं ।
14. NBV, p. 3 :
नाध, दुक्करो कुरुपराभवो मे पडिहासदि ।
15. Read :
नाध, अज्जवि उवहारपुरिसो रक्खसो वा न समागच्छदि दाव पलायदम्ह । (p. 5) ; नाध, किं एदिणा दिव्वहदगेण पओयणं ? (p. 7) ; नाध, अपरिचिदो एस पुरिसो पसिद्धभुयबलो रक्खसो ता किं अकारणे अप्पा संसयतुलाए आरोवियदि ? (p. 8).
16. See note (11) above.

17. Read :

बक:— यद्यपि वयं राक्षसास्तथापि मर्यादां न लङ्घयाम: । एक एव पौरैरस्माकं प्रतिवासरमुपहारपुरुष: कल्पितोऽस्ति (p. 12) . युवामपि एतमेव मेदुरमुपहारपुरुषमश्नीयातम् । (p 13).

18. For example, verses 4, 9, 17 (description), verses 16, 18, 24 (heroic sentiment).

19. Read :

व्यायोगस्तु विधिज्ञै: कार्य: प्रख्यातनायकशरीर: ।
अल्पस्त्रीजनयुक्तस्त्वेकाहकृतस्तथा चैव ॥
वहवश्च तत्र पुरुषा व्यायच्छन्ते यथा समवकारे ।
न च तत्प्रमाणयुक्त: कार्यस्त्वेकाङ्क एवायम् ॥
न च दिव्यनायककृत: कार्यो राजर्षिनायकनिबद्ध: ।
युद्धनियुद्धाधर्षणसंघर्षकृतश्च कर्तव्य: ॥
एवंविधस्तु कार्यो व्यायोगो दीप्तकाव्यरसयोनि: ।

Bharata, *Nātyaśāstra*, GOS. Vol. II, ch. 18, vv. 90-93a. Hemacandra quotes this definition and offers helpful comments to understand the theoretical prescription. See *Kāvyānuśāsana*, VIII 3(53); 2nd revised ed., Bombay 1964, p. 440.

See also, *Daśarūpa*, III. 60-61-62a for some additional details; and *Sāhityadarpaṇa*, VI. 231-233.

20. MBh. Āraṇyakaparvan, Cr. Ed., BORI, Vol. III, chs. 50-78.

21. NV. GOS; Sanskrit Introduction, p. 11-12.

22. Cf. act II. 16, 17.

23. Cf. III. 4 :

'आमन्त्रिता वयमत: प्रमाद...

24. Cf. III. 31 :

सौदामिनीपरिष्वङ्गं मुञ्चन्त्यपि पयोमुच: ।
न तु सौदामिनी तेषामभिष्वङ्गं विमुञ्चति ॥

Kalahaṁsa's interpretation of the first line is :

परिणयनानन्तरं दमयन्तीपरित्यागम्...।

25. Cf. IV. 18 ff :

पुरुष:— देव विदर्भाधिपते, लग्नघटिका वर्तत इति मौहूर्तिका विज्ञापयन्ति ।

26. Read :
दमयन्ती— ..किच्चिरं अज्ज वि अज्जो माधवसेणो जंपिस्सदि । And,
राजा-अये माधवसेन, संवृणु वाचालतां विलम्बमसहिष्णुर्लग्नसमयः ।
IV. p. 52.
27. Cf. IV. 18.
28. Cf. IV. 20 :
राजा— स्थिरं कृत्वा चेतः सुदति वृणु रामैकशरणं
तमेतं भूपालं य इह नव्यः किल नलः ।
And, वसुदत्तः—(उच्चैः स्वरम्)
उन्मीलद् दलशतपत्रपत्रलाक्षि
क्ष्मापालं नलमधिगम्य कामरूपम् ।
...लोकानां सफलय नेत्रकौतुकानि ॥
29. Cf. IV. 24. Note the phrases,
'द्यूतस्य व्यसनीव धूसरकरः', 'निद्रायद्दललोचनां कमलिनीं सन्त्यज्य
'मध्येवनं,' 'क्रामत्यम्बरखण्डमात्रविभवो'.'
30. Cf. V. 2 :
(यावत् पुराकृतकर्म); 5 (...फलं मर्षय कर्मणाम् । न दैवं परिवर्तते);
6 (विना विधिं... हन्तुं को नाम कर्मठः ॥)
31. Act V. (NV. p. 61) Read :
तापसः—स्त्रीसङ्गनिगडितो भवान् नार्हः कामचारस्य । अपि च राज्य-
भ्रंशः स्त्रीसङ्गश्चेति महती व्यसनपरंपरा । and, भ्रष्टराज्यस्य भवतः
श्वशुरकुलगमनमपत्रपावहं मे त्रपाकारि प्रतिभाति ।
32. Cf. V. 11 ff :
कथं तापसः सदृशस्तस्य लम्बोदरनाम्नः कापालिनः । यदि वा नासौ सः ।
अयं खलु कुब्जः खञ्जश्च । (NV. p. 60).
33. See, VI. 17 ff.
नलः—(सरोषम्) किमिदपरिज्ञातमुच्यते देवेन । क्रूरचक्रवर्ती नलोऽस्मि
योऽहमकाण्डे देवीमेकाकिनीं गहने वने निर्लज्जः सन्त्यजामि ।
तस्य महत्यपि पाप्मनि का किलाशङ्का ।
राजा—(ससम्भ्रमम्) कस्त्वमसि ?
नलः—(स्वगतम्) कथं विषादमूर्च्छालेन मयाऽऽत्मा प्रकाशितः । भवतु,
(प्रकाशम्) बाहुक-सूपकारोऽस्मि ।
राजा—तत्किं नलोऽस्मीत्युक्तवानसि ।

नल—किमहं नलोऽस्मत्युक्तवानुतानुक्तमपि नाट्यरसाकुलितचेता देव एवमशृणोत् इति सन्देहः ।

राजा—ध्रुवमस्मि भ्रान्तः । अपरथा क्व स महाराजनिषधस्यापत्यं दर्शनीयरूपो नलः, क्व भवान् सर्वाङ्गविकृताकृतिः ।

34. Read VI, 23 ff.

राजा—(स्मृत्वा) बाहुक, 'देवि, नाहमात्मा विघातेन कलङ्कयितव्यः' इत्यभिदधानो नल इव लक्ष्यसे । तत् कथय परमार्थं समर्थय नः प्रार्थनाम् । कस्त्वमसि । किमर्थं च दुःस्थावस्थः ।

Nala's reply is, however, interrupted by the message of *svayaṁvara*.

35. Nala, in his opening speech, says :

नन्वहं जीवलकेन महीपतेर्दधिपर्णस्याज्ञया विदर्भागतभरतैः प्रयुज्यमानं नाटकमवलोकयितुमाकारितोऽस्मि । Then the King enters and, seeing Nala, says to his minister, अमात्य, पश्य आकृतिविरुद्धमस्य बाहुकनाम्नो वैदेशिकस्य कलासु कौशलम् । किमेतस्य सर्वाङ्गवक्रस्य-तदिदमश्वलक्षणवैलक्षण्यम्, सोऽयं सूर्यपाकविधिः सेयमपरास्वपि क्रियासु चातुरी सम्भवति । (NV., pp. 66-67).

36. See, VII. 13 ff. (NV, p. 86) :

दमयन्ती—तदो कमेण इध समागदाए मए सुणिदं जधा 'दधिवन्नस्स सूवगारो सूरियवागं करेदि' तदो मए चिंतियं 'अज्जउत्तं विणा न अन्नो सूरियवागविज्जं जाणादि' । अणंतरं अज्जउत्तपरिक्खणत्थं नाडअं काऊण कलहंस—खरमुह (This is Vidūṣaka's name)-मयरियाओ पेसिदाओ ।

37. Read :

नलः—अहं देव्या दमयन्त्या पतिव्रताव्रतेनैव क्रीतः । तद् अतःपरं मामनुकूलयन्ती देवी मल्लिकां धवलयति, घनसारं सुरभयति, मृगाङ्कं शिशिरयति । (NV. p. 88).

38. A Brahmin informs Nala :

अद्य प्रातः एकेन केनापि वैदेशिकेन राजकुले तत् किमपि प्रकाशितं येन सा चितामधिरोढुमध्यवसिता । NN. p. 80, Damayantī herself says : 'कविजले अलाहि विलंबेण । न हु एदं असुदपुव्वं वत्तं सुणीय पाणे धरेदुं सक्केमि । अवि य न हवंति अलियाओ असुहसंसिणीओ । वत्ताओ । (?) NV. p. 81.

39. See III. 18, esp.
ममं सेयं दृष्टिर्जडयति च तरम्भयति च । and cf. *Mālatīmādhava* (MM) I. 33d, विकारः कोऽप्यन्तर्जडयति च तापं च कुरुते । also MM. III. 5 ; *Uttara-rāma-carita* (URC), III. 35d विकारश्चैतन्यं भ्रमयति च संमीलयति च । also III. 12.
The second reference is to act VI, opening speech. Read also, VI 4; शरणमधिकं भीरुर्देवीं करिष्यति किं वने । and cf. URC III. 27 (Vāsantī's question to Rāma and his reply III. 28). Incidentally Damayantī's 'कविजले, तुवं वंकभणियाइं जाणासि ।' is comparable to Vāsavadattā's remark, *Ratnāvalī*, act II, ण जाणासि एअस्स वक्कभणिदाइं । in connection with the Vidūṣaka.

40. NV. VI. 23 :

न तथा वृत्तवैचित्री श्लाध्या नाट्ये यथा रसः ।
विपाककम्रमप्याम्रमुद्वेजयति नीरसम् ।।

41. Cf. III. 22. Nala speaking of Damayantī's loveliness :

यद्वक्त्रेन्दुविलाससम्पदमतिश्रद्धालुरालोकितुं
पौलोमीपतिरुद्वहत्यनिमिषं चक्षुःसहस्रं किल ।।

For an unusual perspective, see III, 13 :

सर्वेषामपि सन्ति वेश्मसु कुतः कान्ताः कुरङ्गीदृशो
न्यायार्थी परदारविप्लवकरं राजा जनं बाधते ।
आज्ञां कारितवान् प्रजापतिमपि स्वां पञ्चबाणस्ततः
कामार्तः क्व जनो व्रजेत् परहिताः पण्याङ्गनाः स्युर्न चेत् ।।

42. NV. III. 1 and 2.
43. NBV., verses 14, 19 ; the first is the appeal of the Brahmin victim to Nala ; the second is Arjuna's description of Bhīma.

19

RELIGION AND SANSKRIT DRAMA

Drama is, and has always been, in the history of mankind a popular form of entertainment. In its very early stages it could not escape naturally a strong religious influence. Religion not only supplied the incentive and motive but also themes and subjects for dramatic spectacles, and determined the procedure for presentation, making the performance a kind of a ritual or dedication unto the gods. The dramatic history of many countries that have a long past, like India, Greece etc., bears this out.

Sanskrit Drama is supposed to have a divine origin. The mythical account given in the *Nāṭyaśāstra* (NS.) of Bharata[1] describes *nāṭya* as being created by God Brahmā in response to the demands of the peoples of the three worlds for a plaything (*krīḍanīyaka*), which could provide entertainment to the eye and the ear and which would hold no bar to religious creeds, to social and individual status, or need any particular qualification (*adhikāra*) It is said that Brahmā then created drama as a fifth Veda, selecting significant elements from each of the four Vedas, connecting it with the auxiliary branches of Vedic studies and adding history, legends and tales to it.[2] *Nāṭyaveda*, thus created, was handed over to Indra, the king of gods, who acted as the chief spokesman for the deputation. Brahmā also taught it to Bharatamuni who with his hundred sons was charged with the responsibility of propagating *nāṭya* as a representational art among the people. The account may not have any critical value. But it is suggestive of the genesis of drama. It is possible that the recitative part of the Ṛgveda (*pāṭhya*),

the music (*gita*) of the Sāmaveda, the representational aspect (*abhinaya*) in ritual performances which the Yajurveda deals with and the passions and feelings (*rasān*) reflected in the mantras and incantations of the Atharveda could easily have provided the components with which dramatic spectacle could be built. But the attempt to endow drama with a mythical, divine origin is in itself symptomatic of the religion-prone Indian mind, which is touchingly anxious to secure pious sanction not only for Śāstras and branches of knowledge but also for all forms of art. And the propensity is further noticeable in the objectives which are set for drama[3] A dramatic spectacle promises a picture of the life in the world, an engrossing, many-sided entertainment; but it is also highly instructive and edifying; it provides the rewards of religious piety, material life and prosperity, hopes and desires, inspirations and ambitions, and the bliss that spiritual enlightenment brings (*puruṣārtha-s*). Such objectives may, in part, be connected with the ancient didactive motive attributed to literature; in part to the suggestive literary content. Any way, the strong religious influence underlying the objective of art is clearly evident.

Sanskrit drama endeavoured to realise these objectives, it seems, both in theory and in practice. But it is as a performing art that Sanskrit drama has shown a marked religious bias. Once again, the traditional account yields suggestive details. We learn that after the *nāṭyaveda* was created and handed over to Bharata he was instructed to arrange a performance. The occasion chosen was the Banner festival (*dhvajamaha*) in honour of Indra. The theme was the victory of the gods over the demons which they had recently won. Bharata first used a benedictory song (*nāndī*) with words of blessings from the Veda and, after it, gave a mimic performance (*anukṛti*) of the conquest of the demons by the gods. The performance delighted the gods and they gave various gifts like a banner, a curved stick, a water-pot, a parasol, a fan, a throne, a crown etc. But the demons were enraged and sought to destroy the performance by setting obstacles (*vighnas*) in its way. Indra had to intervene in a hurry. He beat the *vighnas* away with his *vajra*. The

actors and the performance were saved somehow from imminent danger. To prevent a recurrence of such obstacles, therefore, it was thought desirable to have a closed walled theatre for dramatic performances. In addition, god Brahmā assigned the protection of the theatre *pandāl* as a whole to various deities, who were advised to take particular parts or portions under their protective wings.[4]

Fanciful as the account may appear to a modern student of drama, it nevertheless contains some details which have set the general tradition of Sanskrit dramatic performance. (i) The occasion for the performance is a religious or seasonal festival, which naturally brings an appropriate atmosphere of recreation with a touch of ritual or worship. In days to come the drama, like other arts, came to be patronised by ruling kings or rich men ; and they could order a performance to suit their pleasure or fancy, any time of the day or year. Yet the general festive background persisted. Many Sanskrit plays use some seasonal festival as a part of the dramatic theme ; some playwrights state that their plays were produced at royal command or for some special occasions ; and dramatists like Bhavabhūti, who were slow in winning royal patronage, had to get their plays produced by a troupe of wandering actors on the occasion of a religious festival which could assure audience-response. What is worthy of note is that even a seasonal or folk festival in India is not devoid of a religious connection ; and the although the spectators may be only in a mood of enjoyment, the actors would not start a performance without some kind of ritual worship. (ii) The simple possibility that a dramatic performance may be marred or interrupted by an unexpected difficulty or obstacle is invested, in the traditional account, with the colour of a mythical attack by the *vighnas*. But it has fostered the belief that the place of theatrical performance is inhabited by divinities who, when properly worshipped and praised, would protect the actors and spectators against possible odds. The belief persists to the present day, at least among producers and actors of drama ; and they would offer ritual worship invariably before dramatic production even if it be 'behind the curtain'. (iii) In ancient days the belief in divine protection

gave rise to an elaborate preliminary performance that marked the beginning of dramatic production. It was called *pūrvaraṅga.* The entire fifth chapter of the *Nāṭyaśāstra* is devoted to its description. The *pūrvaraṅga* served a threefold purpose. It was in part a musical entertainment. From the arrangement of the musicians and singers on the stage, through the tuning of musical instruments and preliminary vocal exercises, down to a full-fledged musical presentation, the items were intended to please the audience, create the right kind of atmosphere for the dramatic spectacle, and set the pace for a continuous musical accompaniment to the performance, keeping the spectators' minds pleasurably engaged. But what is interesting to note is that the vocal songs used religious themes and offered praise to the deities, describing episodes from the lives of divinities, and also expressed pious wishes for the welfare and prosperity of kings, brahmins and the general populace. The item of *nāndī* was followed by a pure musical piece and then by a song of praise, technically known as *raṅgadvāra* verse, which invoked the blessing of the deity sacred to the festival or the deity worshipped by the local king or of Brahman. Abhinavagupta includes in this praise the favourite deity of the master of the auditorium.[5] In addition, the *pūrvaranga* included items of actual ritual worship presented on the stage. The producer-director of the play (Sūtradhāra) appeared on the stage with two assistants; they carried with them flowers, a pitcher of water and the curved stick (*jarjara*), the symbol of Indra's *vajra* with which he had beaten off the *vighnas.* In the ritual that was performed flowers were offered in the central circle of the front stage sacred to the Creater God and known as *Brahma-maṇḍala*, along with salutations. Similar salutations were offered to the principal deities located in the four quarters of the stage, and worshipful verses were addressed to the *jarjara* as well. The sūtradhāra in addition performed, if possible, a ritual dance in honour of Śiva and Umā, the two deities connected with dance and drama. All this is pure ritual, although it was presented on the stage with all the grace of dance movements and the beauty of tunes and rhythm. Finally, the *pūrvaraṅgā* was also used to

introduce the play and the playwright. Apart from practical uses the *pūrvaranga*, thus shows a strong religious character.

In course of time the elaborate preliminaries came to be gradually dropped. As drama developed on literary lines and afforded full and varied entertainment the preliminaries were not necessary to make up the full fare. But even though the elaborate *pūrvaranga* disappeared, *nāndī* continued to be an auspicious opening of a dramatic performance. As a song of *mangala*, containing praise and prayer offered to a deity, and as an invocation of divine blessings, the dramatists adopted the *nāndī* themselves, although they changed or modified it to suit their own literary or personal purpose. Whatever the theme of a Sanskrit drama, whether it be a serious and heroic play or a play depicting fine and subtle emotions or an outright naughty and farcical play, it could not be composed or presented without the *mangla nāndī* song. The opening *nāndī* came to dominate Sanskrit play-writing and play-production. And another feature, not met within the theoretical texts but either derived from theory or sanctioned by theatric practice, came to characterize the writing and staging of Sanskrit plays, namely, the *bharatavākya*, the epilogue which marks the conclusion of dramatic performance. The *bharatavākya* is really an expression of gratitude on the part of the actors for the sympathetic response and patronage given by the spectators to their performance. But in Sanskrit drama the *bharatavākya* is not merely an *encore*, a final salutation of gratitude and courtesy to the audience, as in Western drama, but also a tribute paid by the actors to Bharata, the mythical pioneer of dramaturgy; and the song recited for epilogue is likewise a prayer for the well-being and prosperity of mankind as a whole. In a way, therefore, a Sanskrit dramatic performance opens and ends with a religious motive. The religious attitude is not merely theoretical. Playwrights endorse it fully in their compositions. The broad-mindedness of Indian religious faiths could accommodate any kind of sincere offering as a service to god; dramatic art need not be an exception to such an attitude. We should not be surprised, therefore, if Kālidāsa were to describe

nāṭya as a *cākṣūṣā kratu* or a visual sacrifice offered upto the gods[6]. A dramatic or dance performance, notwithstanding its theme and content, has always been looked upon in India as a kind of a dedication, as a service of devotion to god. In South India Sanskrit dramas are performed in temple auditoriums, elsewhere on occasions of religious festivals. So, popular entertainment and religious merit appear still to be the twin motivations inspiring dance and drama. Much of this religious colouring has been shed in modern times and drama has moved in a secular direction. There is no longer a *nāndī* and a *bharatavākya* in modern dramatic writing. And yet, such is the force of religious habit or an indirect influence of religion, that even a most modern drama cannot go into production without worship being offered to Naṭarāja, the deity of drama, in which the producer, director, actors and the author take part; and no stage performance would be given without stage worship being done, behind the curtain, with offering of flowers and burning of incense. The pronouncement of Kālidāsa that dramatic art is an offering unto gods remains unaffected in spirit.

† † †

In theory Sanskrit drama maintains a conventional link with religion. Drama is supposed to present varied life of the three worlds. But it is not as factual incidents that life is presented through drama; the emphasis is on emotional delineation (*rasa*). The experience of life as they affect human beings emotionally are the subject-matter of dramatic representation, though it always maintains a convincing relation to the actual actions, speech and behaviour of human beings.[7] Such emotional delineation, rendered and made beautiful by the art of poetry and of theatre is transformed into delightful experience for the reader/spectator; he relishes it and enjoys it immensely. This relish or enjoyment arising aesthetically out of literary and dramatic art is given the technical name of *rasa*; and the theory mentions the kinds of *rasa* as they are connected with the kinds of emotional experiences basically presented in art forms. Bharata connects each such *rasa* with a

particular deity; for example, the sentiment of love has Viṣṇu as its presiding deity; laughter has Pramatha; the furious has Rudra and the pathetic, Yama[8].

Again, in theory, a dramatic performance is to be given in accordance with a certain mode of presentation, technically called *vṛtti*, which is deemed suitable to the theme and content of a play. These *vṛttis* namely, *Bhārati* or verbal mode, *Sāttvati* or concentrated, psycho-somatic mode, *Kaiśiki* or graceful mode, and *Ārabhaṭi* or vigorous mode are all derived by Bharata from Viṣṇu's speech, actions and movements in the course of His fight with two demons, Madhu and Kaiṭabha, and then connected with compositional and performing art.[9] The modes pertain to representation of actions, movements and emotions. They are also connected with the vigorous and the delicate dance, *tāṇḍava* and *lāsya* of Śiva and Umā[10], which may have been a precursor of dramatic presentation and which (dance, mode) seems to have affected deeply the staging of Sanskrit plays[11]. The connection of representational modes to deities like Viṣṇu and Śiva may be imaginary and sought only to derive undisputed sanction of theoretical precepts. But one cannot fail to see that religious motive and influence have inspired theorists and writers on dance and drama.

* * *

In its very early phase of development Sanskrit's drama derived its themes from mythology. The few details available from the *Nāṭyaśāstra* point to the life and actions of gods presented in dramatic shows. Bharata staged first an *anukṛti*, that is to say, a mimetic show celebrating the victory of gods over the demons.[12] Later he gave a more elaborate performance of two heroic plays, *Amṛtamanthana* and *Tripuradāha* ; the first depicted the churning of the milk-ocean by gods and demons for obtaining nectar ; and the second showed the burning of three citadels in mid-air by the fire issuing from the third eye on the forehead of Śiva.[13] The evidence from the grammarian Patañjali indicates similar mimetic shows based on mythological themes, like those of 'binding of Bali' and 'killing of Kaṁsa'. Use of mythological themes conti-

nued almost throughout the entire history of Sanskrit drama. Biographical plays centering on the life and deeds of heroes who were looked upon as divine incarnations, like Rāma or Kṛṣṇa, are often characterised by a deep religious fervour and devotion. A dramatist like Bhāsa introduces the weapons and vehicle of Kṛṣṇa-Viṣṇu on the stage in an incarnated human form. And even when drama turned to secular themes and used kings, ministers, merchants and common men as dramatic characters we often come across a curious blend of supernatural and natural in the weaving of dramatic plots. Sometimes the story moves in the worlds of heaven and earth; and the distance is easily bridged by the natural ability of divine characters to fly down to the earth, making themselves invisible if necessary, and by the special powers or facilities bestowed on mortals whereby they could be lifted up to the world of the gods. The appearance of divine characters is not uncommon in Sanskrit dramatic stories. Nārada often intervenes in human affairs, enjoying his own fun of quarrel and strife, but also acting in favour of truth, justice and righteousness. Sometimes a divinity may make a timely appearance to save a self-sacrificing hero from impending death;[14] or a truthful hero may be stopped from beheading his own wife in fulfilment of his duty and his word of honour.[15] Sages of exceptional powers introduced as dramatic characters and the motive of curse ruling the destinies of men and women are, similarly, quite natural happenings on the Sanskrit stage. All this is surely a part of the culture and beliefs of the people. But it may not be ignored that the underlying force is of religion. Presenting the life and deeds of a god through the art of literature and drama, and listening to such a presentation or seeing it on the stage, are acts of devotion to the mind of Indians. The appearance of divine characters, sages and holy persons on the stage, and the acts of rewards and punishments and divine justice indicated through different motives and beliefs, are held as strengthening our religious faith and inculcating moral and spiritual values of life.

* * *

But we must remember that drama is not exactly a

branch of religious literature or art. In the words of T. S. Eliot, drama is neither religious literature nor devotional poetry, nor again religious propaganda;[16] although it is true that some plays were written, in the later period of the history of Sanskrit drama, for the specific purpose of teaching Vedāntic doctrines or Bhāgavata devotion.[17] However, literature generally reflects a particular consciousness of a people at a certain period of time in regard to faith and beliefs, and that moulds the moral standards and judgements of human behaviour. And it is in this sphere that religious influence is felt, albeit unconsciously. Eliot writes, "The common ground between religion and fiction is behaviour. Our religion imposes our ethics, our judgement and criticism of ourselves, and our behaviour towards our fellow men"[18]. It is in upholding certain standards of character and suggesting certain values of life that Sanskrit drama appears to be deeply influenced by religion, especially when the movement had started towards secularization of dramatic plots and characters.

In the plays which are deliberately intended for fun and laughter, like the *prahasana* and *bhāṇa* types, there is a picture of loose sex relations, hypocritical behaviour, pretense of religious faiths and fraud, deceipt and wanton acts, drinking and gambling; and, not infrequently, men of higher social status are seen to be victims of such vulgarity. Yet the theoretical attitude is that such dramatic shows are meant for the untutored and ignorant classes as pure fun which they can enjoy at their level of intelligence; and to the cultured and educated audience it is a caricature and ridicule of misguided human conduct, from which they may learn proper moral lessons. The clown, Vidūṣaka, figures in this light in serious comedies as a caricature of the untutored brahmin. In the plays of serious intent the picture is naturally different. Occasionally a playwright like Kālidāsa shows the other side of hunting (*mṛgayā*), which the makers of religious law denounce as a vice for the princely and noble classes, but which, looked at as a test of physical endurance, patience and skill, could be regarded as a matchless sport.[19] Even so there is no attempt at defying religious precepts,

On the contrary, the writers seem to accept, perhaps unconsciously, the code of ethics and behaviour recommended by religion ; and the characters they present are fine examples of men and women.

The theory also recommends that the heroes and heroines of dramatic compositions should possess certain virtues and traits of noble character. And either out of respect for theory or due to the unconscious influence of religious ideals, the dramatists follow this direction in practice. This is one among the several reasons why Sanskrit drama did not produce a formal tragedy of the Western type. A tragic hero has to be a great man ; but also a blunderer in some respect, and must suffer before our eyes for his fatal error. The religious ethics and philosophy cannot conceive of such a possibility. For, a bad man must suffer and is no object of compassion ; and a good man's sufferings would always be temporary, mostly due to some wrong done in previous birth, or imposed on him as a test of his character. Death too has a different meaning in Indian religion and philosophy. It may be an apparent termination of one life ; but it may be the beginning of a new and better existence, or an emancipated state of spiritual freedom. Death is only a necessary phase in the evolution of perpetual life and, for the wise at least, it is not an occasion for pity or terror. Absence of the Western type of tragedy in Sanskrit drama has, therefore, a lot to do with religion and philosophy.[20]

* * *

The two dominating themes of Sanskrit dramatic writing are heroism and love. In a drama of heroic emotion a writer has an easy opportunity to extol the great qualities of valour and courage of his hero and present him almost as a superman. In this picture the hero's achievements evoke a sense of the marvel, as death and slaughter he imposes on his adversaries become the inevitable consequences of war and just punishment for opposition and wickedness. This is not inconsistent with the obligation that religion puts on the ruler of the people. In a play like the *Mudrārākṣasa*, which depicts political diplomacy of a realistic and mundane nature,

the acts of deceipt, arson, murder and death which Kauṭilya-Cāṇakya had to go through are justified as political means to strengthen and consolidate the sovereignty of Candragupta. The lesson implied is that war with its terrible consequences is a cruel crime if it were an end in itself ; but it is righteous (*dharmya*) if it served only as a means to bring in an atmosphere of security, peace and prosperity to the people.

In handling the more popular theme of love the polygamous state of society gave the dramatists a greater freedom of expression. In speech and dialogue we often come across physical descriptions of the heroine or other women, and frank expressions of physical intimacy. But the sophisticated comedies carefully avoid open sex behaviour and any suggestive gesture or act which is likely to be indecent in stage representation. Again, the implication is that passion and sex are quite natural and universal ; but their expression or indulgence is justified only when it does not run counter to the precepts of religion.[21] The young lovely heroine for whom the polygamous hero entertains a desperate passion is usually introduced as a harem maid who has unexpectedly or mysteriously joined the queen's retinue ; and towards the end of the play she is revealed to be a princess in disguise and offered in marriage to the king-hero by the queen herself. This is not merely a dramatic device of plot-construction for mystery, suspense and thrill, which Kālidāsa and other dramatists use in their comedies of love. It has a wider context of religion. A polygamous hero was permitted to have many wives ; and so his new passion of love was not looked upon either as betrayal of married love or as wanton indulgence of physical lust. But even so, social and religious custom demanded that a king-hero would take wife of equal social status to him, and in exceptional cases from the lower *varṇas*. Some of such principle which governed the conduct and behaviour of people are very remarkably illustrated in the plays of Kālidāsa. Duṣyanta is irresistibly attracted towards Śakuntalā. But he debates the issue of marriage very seriously in his mind. He convinces his companion, the Vidūṣaka, that Śakuntalā is not a *tāpasa kanyā*. This is vital ; because if Śakuntalā were Kaṇva's daughter as

was the apparent belief, Duṣyanta could *not* have married her in strict accordance with the religious law which did not approve of *pratiloma* marriage, that is, a kṣatriya taking a wife from the *higher* brahmin caste. Kālidāsa shows the different sides of the question and arguments in his dramatic scenes. In a similar vein the dramatist treats the rejection of Śakuntalā as a grave moral dilemma with which Duṣyanta is confronted, and for which no solution is immediately available. Between 'abandoning a wife' and 'accepting some one else's wife as one's own', the graver moral sin, in the eyes of religion, would naturally be the latter. The decision of Duṣyanta is prompted by this consideration. Kālidāsa shows that neither the king family priest nor the *āśrama* people who came with Śakuntalā are in a position to express their dissent or disapproval of Duṣyanta's action.

Drama is ultimately rooted in the *ethos* of a people. This, in the case of Sanskrit drama, has an over-all influence of religion. Barring a few exceptions it was good that drama did not turn into a vehicle for religious propaganda, while it festered the spirit of religious faith and values, It is in these unconscious attitudes that drama could preserve simultaneously the dignity of religion and its own value as literature and theatre-art.

References

1. NS. GOS I. 8-12.
2. *Ibid.* I. 16-18.
3. See *Ibid.* I. 109 ff. ; 114-115.
4. *Ibid.* I. 54-98.
5. See *Ibid.* V. 112-113. Abhinava comments : देवस्य विष्णोः स्तोत्रं पूर्वं कृत्वा यां देवतां उद्दिश्य उत्सवादौ नाट्यं कृतं सा तत्र स्तोतव्या । अथ एवमेव (येन) नाट्यं प्रवर्तितं तत्प्रेक्षावतां आराध्य-देवता । स चेद् उदासीनः तर्हि ब्रह्मणः अयभगो ।
   See my *Bharata-Nāṭya-Mañjari*, pp. 54-55.
6. Cf. *Mālavikāgnimitra*, I. 4 : देवानामिदमामनन्ति मुनयः कान्तं क्रतुं चाक्षुषम् ।

7. Cf. NS. I. 106-107 ; esp. त्रैलोक्यस्वास्य सर्वस्य नाट्यं भावानुकीर्तनम् ।
8. NS. VI. 44-45.
9. See NS. ch. XX. 8-12.
10. Cf. NS. I. 41-46, IV. 11-18.
11. Cf. Kālidāsa's statement : रुद्रेणेदं (नाट्यं) उमाकृतव्यतिकरे स्वाङ्गे विभक्तं द्विधा ।
12. NS. I. 56-57.
13. NS. IV. 1-10.
14. See Harṣa's Nāgānanda, where Goddess Gaurī appears to save Jīmūtavāhana.
15. This refers to the story of king Hariścandra. See *Caṇḍakauśika* of Kṣemīśvara (10th-11th cent. A.D.).
16. See "Religion and Literature" in *Selected Essays*, Faber and Faber, London, MCM XXXII, pp. 388-401.
17. For example, *Prabodhacandrodaya* of Kṛṣṇamiśra (11th cent. A. D.) ; and some later plays on Kṛṣṇa legend, like those of Rūpa Goswāmin's (16th cent. A. D.); or *Kṛṣṇabhakticandrika* of Anantadeva (17th cent. A. D.); or *Kaṁsavadha* of Śeṣakṛṣṇa (18th cent. A. D) & etc.
18. T. S. Eliot, *op. cit.*, p. 393.
19. Cf. *Śākuntala*, II. 5.
20. For a fuller discussion see my *Tradegy and Sanskrit Drama*, Popular Prakashan, Bombay, 1974.
21. In the words of the Gītā, it is 'धर्म-अविरुद्धः कामः' that is approved.

20

ORIGIN OF NĀṬYA : ROLE OF ŚIVA

[1]

In an article contributed to a volume in honour of Professor Dr. Eugeniusz Sluszkiewicza,[1] Professor M. Christopher Byrski suggests that Maheśvara, in the *maṅgala śloka* of the *Nāṭyaśāstra* (NS.) must mean Indra. He is "absolutely sure," "fully convinced and completely certain" of this meaning, and states some arguments to "support this conviction" reached through his "intuitive discovery".

The question is not only of the word *maheśvara*. It is wider in that it is connected with the mythical origin of *nāṭya* and the contribution that Maheśvara is presumed to have made towards it.

But first Prof. Byrski's arguments : (1) He thinks that salutation to Śiva along with Brahman is very rare in Indian literature and refers to Dr. Ghosh and Abhinavagupta whose opinions imply that "something is amiss in that invokation". Generally, Brahman, Śiva and Viṣṇu go together. But Viṣṇu's contribution is only of the four *vṛttis* towards the *nāṭya* ; this is a sectarian myth about the styles of dramatic representation not connected with the myth of origin of drama. The myth concerning Śiva is similarly sectarian, more so, because Śiva only witnessed the dramatic performance given by Bharata and his actors and contributed to their art the dance. Indra, on the other hand, is vitally connected with *nāṭyotpatti*; he is 'mentioned seventeen times' in this myth; he plays a 'crucial role in the defense of the first performance' ; besides 'both Śiva and Viṣṇu reside in

Indra's *jarjara*'; this means that 'they are subordinate to Indra'. Maheśvara, therefore, must mean Indra whose 'role in the creation and preservation of *nāṭya* puts into the shade everything achieved in the *nāṭyotpatti* by Śiva'. (2) Prof. Byrski refers to the evidence from Hopkin's *Epic Mythology* which goes to show that the names Pitāmaha and Maheśvara are rather indiscriminately used for the gods; but while Kṛṣṇa-Viṣṇu and Śiva are mentioned by their own names, Indra is still known as Maheśvara'. 'Consequently it seems certain that the Maheśvara of the *nāṭyotpatti* myth is none but Indra himself'. (3) The third argument is derived from the circumstance that '*nāṭya-veda*' was enunciated by Brahman at the instigation of Indra. Thus both of them were absolutely substantial in creation. An asking *śiṣya* and an answering *guru* are equally indispensable in order that knowledge may be enunciated....This is why the eponymous author of the *Nāṭyaśāstra* makes obeisance to Brahman and to Indra, i.e., to Pitāmaha and to Maheśvara'.

The second argument is rather irrelevant to the present question. The promiscuous use of a name is in full evidence in the later metrical compilations of a 'thousand names' (*Sahasra-nāma*) of a deity. Indra, as an important god in the Vedic pantheon and as the king of the gods in Brāhmaṇico-purāṇic designation, could easily bear the name Maheśvara, because etymologically the word means 'the great, supreme ruler'. The question is not if Maheśvara means Indra; it can and may. The real point is whether Indra is meant to be denoted in the context of the *Nāṭyaśāstra maṅgala*. Neither the Text nor the established tradition appears to suggest that Indra is so intended to be denoted.

[2]

The opening verses of the first chapter of the *Nāṭyaśāstra* have an air of purāṇic approach towards the solution and elucidation of a particular problem. A need for a *krīḍanīyaka* is felt by all the denizens of heaven, for a diversion that could be easily available to one and all without restrictions of status, intellectual equipment and educational rights; and

to voice this need Indra is chosen to act as the spokesman of the entire inquisitive host. This role Indra plays as the leader and king of the heavenly hosts. But in itself it cannot entitle him to a worshipful salutation.

The Śāstric tradition that is deeply rooted in Indian life from ancient days and that is adhered to with a feeling of veneration is that of offering obeisance to the mythical founder and teacher of a particular *śāstra*, and in the case of later works, to the great teachers of the *Śāstra* whose works have acquired an indisputable authority. Bhaṭṭoji Dīkṣita, for instance, pays an homage to the *munitraya* at the beginning of his grammatical work; and it is worthy of note that the ancient teachers of a *śāstra* are venerated as 'sages' by the later writers. In this firmly established tradition, a *śiṣya*, however instrumental he may be in the genesis of a *śāstra* and whatsoever his personal status may be, does *never* come to receive any homage in the opening *maṅgala*. True : no *śāstra* can be studied and perpetuated without a tradition of pupils ; but on that account a pupil does never become an object of venerable salutation. A writer may thank a pupil for urging him to found or compose a *śāstra*. But that is all. Salutation is only due to teachers. I am afraid that Professor Byrski has forgotten to grasp this important aspect of the Indian tradition. And if Pandit Rameshvar Jha has endorsed his 'intuition' in taking Maheśvara to denote Indra, as the Professor states he does, then Panditji too, I am afraid, has permitted himself to lean in a wrong direction.

A subtle distinction must be recognised between a mere myth and its relation to a particular work, that is to say, between the myth of *nāṭyotpatti* and its relation to a theoretical work on *nāṭya*. What is relevant to the creation of the *śāstra* is obeisance to persons, mythical, mythological or otherwise, who could be regarded as the founders and propounders of the *śāstra*. Pitāmaha (Brahmā) and Maheśvara (Śiva) are mentioned in the *nāṭyaśāstra* as *guru-s*, a role which Indra cannot be imagined to have played any time.

Indra is, no doubt, mentioned several times in the first

and the third chapters of the NS. But the words used are Mahendra (I. 11, 54, 56, 82, 90 ; III. 13, 25, 37) ; Śakra (I. 21, 24, 59, 69, 75, 76); Devarāja (I. 13). Devarāṭ (I. 67, 70); Indra (I. 97, III. 4) ; Sureśvara (I. 19) ; Purandara, Amarapati (III. 50). Nowhere is the name Maheśvara used for Indra, neither in the account of origin of *nāṭya*, nor in the account of the removal of *vighnas* and protection of the playhouse. On the contrary, Śiva is positively denoted by the word Maheśvara (IV. 16), and Brahmā is mentioned as Sura-guru (I. 42).

In battering away the *vighnas*, created by Virūpākṣa and other asuras, Indra is naturally playing his role as the chief of heavenly government. It is certainly a commendable role ; and the account tells us that all the gods compliment Indra immediately on his spontaneous and effective action (I. 71-74). But it is worth noting that, considering the possibility of impediments to dramatic spectacles in future, it is God Brahman who proceeds to take appropriate measures for protection. Brahman directs the construction of a closed playhouse, appoints various gods, semi-divine beings and denizens of the nether world like Vāsuki and nāgas to guard different parts of the stage and the theatre. In this protection, Brahman himself takes a part and Śiva, Viṣṇu, Indra and others are naturally included. Brahman further directs the creation of *jarjara* to ward off obstacles (III. 78). In this *jarjara* are placed Vajra, Śiva, Viṣṇu, Skanda, Śeṣa, Vāsuki, several other gods and Brahman himself occupies a portion. This is a mythical or purāṇic way of suggesting that the *jarjara* is now made an all-powerful weapon against all *vighnas*. Indra gets his own share in this elevation of status in that the *jarjara* is his own *vajra* strengthened by the presence of all gods ; inclusion of *jarjara-pūjā* in the preliminaries of the dramatic performance is another honour bestowed on Indra ; and Brahman's direction to give the first practical demonstration of the *Nāṭyaveda* at the Indra-maha is a similar honour conferred on Indra. What more could the gods do for Indra ? He has received adequate praise for his role. If Professor Byrski thinks that Śiva and Viṣṇu who reside in the *jarjara*, although in the illustrious

company of Brahman, "yet . . they are subordinate to Indra," he must then be prepared to put Brahman also in the subordinate category ! Indra's high position is in political and administrative sphere, as the chosen king of the gods. But the Indian accounts, purāṇic and literary, unambiguously imply that Indra derives his strength and power only due to the support of the three principal gods. Professor Byrski needs to look into Indian Mythology and the inter-relations of gods more carefully.

It is not possible to belittle the role of Śiva in the origin and shaping of *nāṭya* in its early phases. Pitāmaha Brahman gets the pride of place as the creator of the Nāṭyaveda by choosing significant elements from the four Vedas and combining them into a new entity. Brahman is also held as the first divine teacher (I. 42) who passed on the Nāṭyaveda to Bharata for practical demonstration. It must be remembered that *nāṭya* is not merely a *śāstra* of theoretical precepts. It is also an art of stage representation. And this latter, it appears from the account, lacked the *Kaiśikī* mode even in Brahman's creation. Brahman is reported to have become conscious of this lacuna ; he remembers suddenly the charming and beautiful mode of Śiva's *lāsya* performance that he himself had seen, and advises Bharata to include this mode in his representation (I. 41-45). In the next account of the first performance of *nāṭya* (NS. IV), we learn that Brahman directs the shows to be presented to Śiva. Śiva is pleased with the show ; but feels that the *pūrvaraṅga* did not contain the elements of song and dance sufficiently, and advises the use of *citra pūrvaraṅga*, with *abhinaya* effected through graceful and vigorous movements of feet and hands, graceful postures of the body and symbolic gestures. On Brahman's request to teach this mode of *abhinaya*, Śiva calls Taṇḍu and directs him to coach Bharata properly (IV. 11-18). Shorn of technical details the account means that the *nāṭya* as created by Brahman had the verbal *pāṭhya* element (*Bhāratī vṛtti*) which is common to all literary compositions ; it had the vigorous element which heroic episodes require for presentation (*Ārabhaṭī vṛtti*) ; and it had that concentrated element of *abhinaya* where body and mind

act in harmony (*Sāttvikī vṛtti*), which is also common to all *abhinaya.* But drama and its stage representation are principally intended for beauty and pleasure and must use the pleasant emotions of love and laughter. The acting modes for such emotion which carry grace and pleasure must be added to the *nāṭya* in order to make it complete and comprehensive. These modes are derived from the solo *tāṇḍava* of Śiva and *lāsya* of Umā-Maheśvara in their blended form. The role of Śiva is, thus, not merely that of a contributor of dance but that of a *teacher* of the particular *āṅgika abhinaya*, which is perhaps the most important aspect of stage representation of *nāṭya*, the others *vācika*, *āhārya*, and *sāttvika* being dependent on the actor's ability and the availability of material means.

There is no wonder then why Brahman bows down to Śiva, calls him Mahātman and Surottama, requests him to be the principal judge of the performance, and later to *teach* the technical modes of *āṅgika abhinaya* (IV.5-7, 17-18). Viṣṇu's contribution of the four *Vṛttis* is mentioned in the development of the *nāṭya*. But there is one significant difference between Śiva and Viṣṇu : Viṣṇu developed the *Vṛttis* incidentally, in connection with his fight with Madhu and Kaiṭabha. He is not an exponent of them. On the contrary, Śiva is a practising artist, as it were, and a teacher of dance modes.[2] That is why, Śiva must receive obeisance in the *maṅgala* of *Nāṭyaśāstra*, which is a work on the theory and practice of drama.

[3]

The testimony of later theoreticians and poets undoubtedly supports Śiva as the principal deity of *nāṭya.*

The author of the *Daśarūpaka* salutes Ganeśa who gives a thundering response at the *tāṇḍava* of Nīlakaṇṭha.[3] Śāradātanaya's tribute is to the dancing Gaṇeṣa.[4] Sāgaranandin specifically refers to Gaurīkānta, Śiva and salutes Him as the Revealer of *Nāṭyavidyā*[5].

Śiṅgabhūpāla's tribute is to the couple Śiva and Umā, whose *lāsya* and *tāṇḍava* carry the heart-beat of the emotions of love and heroism.[6]

Śārṅgadeva, in his chapters on dance, makes a special obeisance to Śiva, identifying the universe as His physical activity (*āṅgika*), all sciences and literature as His utterance (*vācika*), and heavenly luminaries as His decoration (*āhārya*).[7]

The other authors who incidentally write about dramaturgy in their works on Poetics address their *maṅgala* to the Goddess of speech. And Rāmacandra-Guṇacandra being Jain authors hail the Jainī Speech. This is natural ; but the testimony is clear. Abhinavagupta too does his personal *maṅgala* by addressing the two opening verses of his *Abhinavabhāratī* to Śiva, describing Him as the abode of discriminating wisdom in the matter of scriptural texts and their meaning.

It is worthwhile remembering that the two terms *nṛtya* and *nāṭya*, although slightly different in their strict technical sense,[8] are used almost as synonyms in the history of Sanskrit drama. Kālidāsa does so in his *Mālavikāgnimitra* : Gaṇadāsa and Haradatta, the dance-masters, are called Nāṭyācārya-s, and Mālavikā's dance performance of *chhalita* is called *nāṭya*. Emotional content and expression through *abhinaya* provide the common ground for *nṛtya* and *nāṭya*. In fact, the old traditional phrase for 'acting in a drama' is 'dancing a drama'.[9] So Kālidāsa too attributes the origin of drama to the twin dance of Śiva-Umā.[10] The tradition has come down to the modern times. Śiva still remains the deity of drama.

References

1. *Anantapāram kila Śabdaśāstram...*, Ksiega pamiatkowa ku czci Eugeniusza Sluszkiewicza, wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego; (pp. 57-60).
2. Abhinava's comments on the relevant portions are quite illuminating : एको [पितामहः] विजिगीषुः नाट्यप्रवर्तयिता इति देवः । भगवान् तु आनन्दनिर्भरतया क्रीडाशीलः सन्ध्यादौ नृत्यति इति नाट्ये तदुपस्कारिणि च नृत्ते तदुपज्ञं प्रवृत्तिः इति तौ एव अत्र आधिदैवतं गुरू च इति नमस्कार्यौ । लक्ष्मीपतिस्तु यद्यपि वृत्तीनां

निर्माता तथापि पितामहादिवद् असौ स्वकर्तव्यमात्रनिष्ठः तथाचरन् न

अत्र नाट्ये लोकवद् उपजीवितः इति गुरुत्वाभावात् न नमस्कृतः ।
NS. GOS. Vol. I, 5nd revised ed., p. 2.
On IV. 5 ff. : एतेन नाट्यप्रयोगः तद्विदे प्रथमं दर्शनीयः इति दर्शयति । ... महात्मशब्देन तस्यैव अत्र प्रेक्षणे सम्यग् औचित्यमाह । *op. cit.*, p. 86.
On IV. 13 : भरतमुनिना तावद् भगवन्नृत्तकैशिकीदर्शनात् तत्प्रयोगार्थमनुस्मृत्य किञ्चिन् नियोजितम् । तत्तु सम्यगुपदेशाभावात् न अतीव सुश्लिष्टम् इति *op. cit.*, p. 87.

3. नमस्तस्मै गणेशाय यत्कण्ठः पुष्करायते ।
मदाभोगघनध्वानो नीलकन्ठस्य ताण्डवे ।। DR. I. 1.

4. प्रश्च्योतन् मदमन्थरभ्रमरिकाझङ्कारगीतं मुहुः ।
हेलाबृंहितवादनव्यतिकरं भावोल्लसत्प्रक्रियम् ।
नृत्यन्नस्तु सुखाय वः करिमुख. पुण्योपहारैश्चिराद्
आनन्दी नटभावितैरिव यथाभावैः स सामाजिकः ।।
Bhāvaprakāśana, I. 1

5. अगणितगुणोघसिन्धुं नाटकविद्या प्रकाशिता येन ।
तमजमनादिममन्तं गौरीकान्तं नमस्यामः ।।
Nāṭakalakṣaṇaratnakośa, I. 1

6. शृङ्गारवीरसौहार्द मौग्ध्यवैयात्यसौरभम् ।
लास्यताण्डवसौजन्यं दाम्पत्यं तद् भजामहे ।।
Rasārṇavasudhākara, I. 1

7. आङ्गिकं भुवनं यस्य वाचिकं सर्ववाङ्मयम् ।
आहार्यं चन्द्रतारादि तं नुमः सात्त्विकं शिवम् ।।
Saṅgītaratnākara, VII. 1

8. अन्यद् भावाश्रयं नृत्यम्, नृत्तं ताललयाश्रयम् ।
आद्यं पदार्थाभिनयो मार्गो, देशी तथा परम् ।।
मधुरोद्धतभेदेन तद्वयं द्विविधं पुनः ।
लास्यताण्डवरूपेण नाटकाद्युपकारकम् ।। *Daśarūpaka*, I. 9, 10

9. Cf. रम्भाभिधानं कौबेरं नाटकं ननृतुस्ततः । *Harivaṁśa*, Cr. Ed. B.O.R I., Poona, Vol. II, Appendix 29 F, p. 345, 1. 286. For other references and discussion see my article "Nāṭya and Nṛtya : A Perspective on Inter-relations".

10. रुद्रेणेदमुमाकृतव्यतिकरे स्वाङ्गे विभक्तं द्विधा । *Mālavikāgnimitra*, I. 4b.

21

NĀṬYA AND NṚTYA : A PERSPECTIVE ON INTER-RELATIONS

Nāṭya and *Nṛtya*, Drama and Dance, are in our present understanding two distinct performing arts. Though they be related to some extent, the themes and techniques of their expression are apparently different. We have in modern theatric performance a *ballet* or dance drama. But it is felt to be different from *nāṭaka*, a regular dramatic performance with which we are familiar.

Scholars point out that dance and drama acquired distinct and separate forms in the course of evolution and development. But in the beginning they were closely allied as performing arts. In fact, drama is said to have evolved from dance. It will be interesting and instructive to examine the inter-relations of dance and drama from theoretical and practical points of view.

Grammatically, *nāṭya* and *nṛtya* are both to be derived from the root *naṭ* belonging to two different orders. Root no. 310 of the *Bhvādi-gaṇa* gives *nāṭya* and *naṭa* ; no. 781 gives *nṛtta* and *nṛtya*, from which comes the word *nartaka* which means a dancer; the governing *sūtra* is '*naṭa nṛtau*'.[1] Grammar thus shows a close alliance between *naṭa* and *nartaka* ; and in popular parlance the two are often mentioned together, particularly in the context of festivities.

It is interesting to observe that playing a part in a dramatic performance was described, in ancient days, by the phrase 'dancing a drama' : The actors were said to dance a drama.[2] And a theorist of a late period explains the term *nāṭaka* by saying that drama is called 'nāṭaka' because its performance

makes the hearts of spectators *dance* with its varied entertaining devices.[3] Significant also is Kālidāsa's use of the terms *nāṭya* and *nṛtya* as synonyms. In *Mālavikāgnimitra* Kālidāsa describes *nāṭya* as derived from the *tāṇḍava* and *lāsya* dance of Śiva and Pārvatī in their inseparable form known as Ardhanārī-naṭeśvara.[4] The two dance masters' in the service of king Agnimitra are called Nāṭyācārya. What Mālavikā was learning under her preceptor is termed '*nāṭya*', involving fivefold *abhinaya*. And the performance she gave of the *chalita* dance is also termed as a dramatic performance. Obviously, the two terms are used in a closely allied sense.

The aspect that brings the two arts so close together is *abhinaya*, histrionic acting, as the *Saṅgīta-ratnākara*[5] points out. In theory, there is a clear difference among *nṛtta*, *nṛtya* and *nāṭya*. Following the direction given by Dhanañjaya in his *Daśarūpaka*[6], the pure dance form is *nṛtta*, which depends upon the rhythm and tempo of a musical beat and in which dance steps have to be in perfect harmony with the musical beats of a percussion instrument. An example is the *Kathaka* dance. The hand movements and gestures used here resemble those used in *nṛtya* ; but here in *nṛtta* they are only ornaments, external to the dance form. *Nṛtya*, on the other hand, is a dance form which exhibits a mental state, a mood ; and, through it, attempts also to work out an incident or a small happening. That is why, the movements of the body, gestures and facial expressions used in *nṛtya* become a part of the dance theme. This is *abhinaya*, *āṅgika abhinaya*, which *nṛtya* shares with *nāṭya*, along with the display of mental state or emotion. The well-known dance form called *Bharatanāṭyam* is a dance of this kind. Traditionally it is held that *bha* in the word 'Bharata' stands for *bhāva* or emotion, *ra* for rāga or musical melody, and *ta* for *tāla* or rhythmic beat and tempo. Though the aspects of music and rhythm are common to *nṛtta* and *nṛtya*, *nṛtya* comes close to *nāṭya* in its attempt to exhibit an emotional sequence and in using *āṅgika abhinaya* for the purpose.

However, *nāṭya* covers a wider range. In the words of Dhanañjaya, the difference between *nṛtya* and *nāṭya* is like interpreting a word or a thing and a full sentence or a

complete happening.[7] *Nāṭya* or drama is an expression of the life of humanity, a picture of the acts and feelings of human beings, of their joys and sorrows, as Bharata would say. And to show such an organised whole picture *nāṭya* uses, unlike *nṛtya*, the fourfold *abhinaya*, *vācika* in the form of spoken dialogue, *āṅgika* in the form of body movements and gestures, *āhārya nepathyaja* in the form of make-up, costumes, accessories and some stage props to suggest the scene of action, and *sāttvika* or psycho-somatic *abhinaya* which expresses an emotion by facial expression and corresponding physical indication.[8] *Nṛtya* does not require this fourfold *abhinaya* because it can express a *bhāva* with *āṅgika* and *sāttvika abhinaya*. With our knowledge of the developed drama we may say further that *nṛtya* does not require a written script because it does not use spoken dialogue as drama does; though dance may require choreography if an incident (like Kṛṣṇa's stealing butter) or an idea (based on a poem or a verse) is intended to be represented by dance mode.

[2]

The technical difference between dance and drama, it appears, must have been quite pronounced as the two arts developed on their own. But in the early stages of drama movement the difference could not have been so glaring, as we saw earlier. The account of the first dramatic performance found in the *Nāṭyaśāstra* of Bharata tells us that it used considerable music; Śiva, before whom the performance was held, advised Bharata to use *Kaiśiki Vṛtti* which is a tender and graceful mode of acting allied to dance. Besides, Bharata himself describes his first performance as an *anukṛti*, which means a mimetic performance acted with movements and gestures of the body. Drama, in its early stages, did not have a full script of dialogue; the theme or the 'story' was conveyed by a few songs; the actors presented the 'action' by poses, movements and gestures, and perhaps by improvised exclamations or some words. It is only when dramatists came forward with a full-fledged play written in complete

dialogue pattern that drama must have deviated from mere dance.

Yet the Sanskrit drama does not appear to have broken away from the dance mode. What is called a 'dance drama' is a very late development in the history of Sanskrit drama and it is technically called an '*upa-rūpaka*' or a secondary dramatic pattern. Even then, Sanskrit drama made ample use of music, which is a feature of dance, as an accompaniment to the entire performance beginning with the opening benedictory song *nāndī* and ending with *bharata-vākya* which was a final prayer for general well-being and prosperity, and also an expression of gratitude on the part of the dramatic troupe for the sympathetic response of the spectators to the performance. In between there was singing of *dhruvās*, which carried only the melody and rhythm patterns without words, as the *Nāṭyaśāstra* tells us, to mark the entrance and exit of important characters and striking incidents in the play and as an accompaniment to significant moods and emotions. This was different from the songs a dramatist may use as part of his dramatic story. In fact, the musicians and instrument-players sat in a close semi-circle at the back of the stage and accompanied the actors' performance[9].

In the early stage, the drama began with an elaborate preliminary performance called *pūrvaraṅga*. It was partly religious in character and consisted of the worship and salutations to the deities that the Sūtradhāra (State-manager, Director and Actor) offered; it was partly musical also, as it involved singing of the *nāndī* by the Sūtradhāra and of a number of *dhruvās* accompanying the Sūtradhāra's movement. From Bharata's description of the *pūrvaraṅga* it becomes clear that the Sūtradhāra strikes the *Vaiṣṇava* pose when he enters the stages. When he moves in four directions to do the salutations to the deities of the quarters and comes forward to the front stage to offer flowers in the *Brahma-maṇḍala*, his steps synchronise with the rhythmic musical beat and the tunes the musicians are playing or singing. In other words, the Sūtradhāra's movements and poses in the *pūrvaraṅga* are attuned to dance technique. In a more elaborate performance,

called *Citra-pūrvaraṅga*, a team of dancers entered the stage, according to the *Nāṭyaśāstra* and gave a dance exhibition to the accompaniment of loud music and showering of flowers.

With the growth of drama the elaborate preliminaries were no longer necessary, except the opening *nāndī* and introduction of the play and the playwright. But the dramatic performance still needed the essence and technique of dance in other respects of histrionic representation.

A drama is not a solo performance like that of a dancer (except the *Bhāṇa*, which is played by a single actor). Different actors can assume different dramatic roles and appear on the stage with appropriate make-up, costume and accessories. But in this respect Bharata suggests that special *colours* are to be used in the make-up of characters to distinguish them symbolically: For example, king-hero, gods and celestial characters will be made-up *gaura* or yellowish-red; demons dark; Gaṅga and Himavat white; sages generally plum-coloured; Vaiśya and Śūdra bluish. Such symbolism is used for dresses and ornaments and hair-styles too. Heavenly men and women will have hair piled on head and use pearls; Apsaras will appear in white; Gandharva woman in red, using rubies; Rākṣasīs in black, using blue ornaments; Muni-kanyā will have hair in a single braid, no jewels and dress proper for forest-dwelling; on special occasions celestial characters may wear multi-coloured garments; the king's officers will generally have clean and white dress; ascetics will dress in barks and skins and wandering ascetics in *kāṣāya* or reddish-brown garments, as also the Kañcukī.[10] Such a symbolism in the matter of make-up, costume and ornaments is surely suggestive of a particular technique and it is connected with the art of dance; for dance has to communicate with suggestive symbolism which is determined in theory and fixed in practice by conventions. Dance confines it to physical movements and hand-gestures ; Bharata seems to have extended it to *āhārya abhinaya*. The principle in essence is the same : communication by coventional and suggestive symbols.

The Sanskrit drama had to draw on the suggestive technique for representing the 'scene of action' because the use of stage props, curtains and painted scenery, and stage

property was very limited on the ancient Sanskrit stage. Simple objects like stools which could be easily carried by actors were used; except a small screen, called *yavanikā-javanika* or *tiraskariṇi*, no curtains were used, which came during the later development, probably in the tenth century A. D. So, the place of action, time, season, garden, different locations like heaven and earth, trees and creepers etc. had to be conveyed by suggestion only. This was done partly by the descriptive word used by the poet and which was a necessary part of the spoken dialogue. Where additional indications were necessary or desirable the actors had to use what Bharata calls *citra abhinaya* : that is, *āṅgika abhinaya* which combined movement of limbs like hands, feet, head, eyes, symbolic gestures of fingers and facial expression along with the words of the dialogue.

Bharata's recommendation for using *lāsya-aṅgas*[11] suggests that the graceful technique of dance was occasionally used even for delivering dialogue, especially when the situation was related to love and love intrigue. The actor in such a situation played the scene with dance movements and gestures, sang or used musical accompaniment.

It appears that the Sanskrit drama relied on the dance technique in respect of (a) dramatic speeches which had to be delivered with stage conventions; (b) certain movements which were supposed to indicate a change of scene; (c) certain actions or incidents which it was not possible to present on the stage either due to the obvious limitations of a theatre stage or for reasons of social propriety. The form of acting related to these is, more or less, of the *āṅgika* type and it is combined with the dance mode to render it suggestive.

(a) Examples of the first kind are the stage directions related to *janāntika* and *apavāritaka* speeches. The former is a private conversation between two dramatic characters which intends to exclude all other characters present on the stage. Such a speech was delivered by a character making the *tripatāka* hand-gesture : second finger near the small finger and the thumb bent, the other three fingers held erect, and the hand held up over the shoulder. The *apavāritaka* was

revelation of a secret taking the spectators in confidence ; this was also conveyed by *tripatāka hasta* according to Bharata ; but in later dramatic practice the convention was changed, perhaps for distinction, to the character turning his or her back to the stage, facing the audience, and delivering the line. (b) As we have seen, the Sanskrit drama did not use curtains or painted scenery. So, when a change of scene occurred, it was indicated simply by the characters moving round the stage and coming from one spot to another. This walking round, *parikramaṇa*, is a symbolic movement and suggests that the scene is changed. (c) In dramatic representation there are a number of simple actions, like plucking or picking flowers, climbing down or up a staircase and so on, which could be realistically shown as much as possible, if adequate stage property and scenery (what is called *nepathya* now) could be provided. But the Sanskrit stage lacked the material and scientific means, in old days, to provide all such property required for a scene ; and so, such actions had to be shown by mime. The *Nāṭyaśāstra* recommends that such mimetic actions may be shown with dance mode so that they would appear graceful and charming. For plucking flowers from an imaginary creeper Bharata, therefore, suggests a particular pose (*sthāna*) and a graceful movement of fingers. For climbing up or down, as for example when Urvaśī comes down from the heavenly region to the terrace of Purūravas' palace, or when Candragupta mounts up to the top terrace to see the moonlight festival, the actor not only gesticulates the movement but also takes the steps with proper rhythm and movement of fingers as in a dance exhibition. Such a technique applies to chariot-ride as well. Duṣyanta pursuing a running deer in his chariot could not be represented even on a modern stage. The progress of the chariot has therefore to be shown by mimetic action and *parikramaṇa*. Bharata would suggest that the entire movement could be acted with rhythmic steps and hand-gestures to give it a colourful and charming appearance. Like vehicles, long journey, fire or flood, actual fight or battle too could not be shown on a theatre stage. The Sanskrit drama uses the method of reportage or narration for such incidents and happenings.

But when a fight is somehow shown, as Bhāsa does in some of his plays, it is expected that the combatants would move in a suggestive and graceful manner akin to dance movement.[12]

[3]

It need not be supposed that this is mere theory. We get occasional evidence from Sanskrit drama to surmise that the Sanskrit dramatists were aware of this representational technique and hinted it or used it in their written scripts, although this is really a consideration for the director-producer of a play. One such instance is the description of the mace fight between Bhīma and Duryodhana in *Ūrubhaṅga*. Bhāsa reports the fight through three soldiers ; but in the description there is a reference to the particular poses (*sthāna*) the fighters strike, their approach to each other and to the *cārī* or circular movement with which a fighter proceeds to meet his opponent.

The most telling example is probably the scene of Purūravas' search for the lost Urvaśī in Kālidāsa's *Vikramorvaśīya*. The scene is written like a *ballet* ; whether Kālidāsa wrote it like this originally or changed it for some special occasion is an academic question. As the longer version of this act stands, there is music, and songs are sung from the green-room during the movements of Purūravas. He approaches various objects to the accompaniment of music and with dance steps, as the stage directions clearly show. The swan, peacock etc. to whom Purūravas approaches and inquires about Urvaśī are not a part of the scenic background ; they are to be represented by dancers ; and Purūravas also meets them with dance steps. For a prolonged scene of pathos, with only one character moving and speaking on the stage, such a technique of song and dance is certainly necessary to make the drawn-out and repetitive scene presentable and attractive[13] Kālidāsa with his poetic and dramatic insight seems to have realised it. In my opinion, a similar technique will be appropriate for playing the scene of Śakāra's pursuit of Vasantasenā in *Mṛcchakaṭika*.

In brief, the limitations and handicaps of the ancient

Sanskrit stage made adoption of mime and dance technique quite necessary. To this situation must be added Bharata's concept of *nāṭya* as a *krīḍanīyaka*, that is, a play-thing, an article or show for entertainment and pleasure. Realistic mode of representation, *lokadharmī abhinaya*, has to be used wherever possible. But dramatic show is a make-belief, and the stage has limitations. That is why, *nāṭyadharmī abhinaya* can never be avoided. And it is in this respect that Bharata recommends the dance technique to lend grace and charm to theatric representation.

References

1. Cf. 'णट नृतौ' (भ्वादिगण 310, 781). On the second citation Bhaṭṭojī Dikṣit writes : इदमेव पूर्वमपि पठितम् (भ्वादिगण 310) । तत्र अयं विवेकः । पूर्वपठितस्य नाटयमर्थः । यत्कारिषु नटव्यपदेशः । वाक्यार्थाभिनयो नाट्यम् । घटादौ तु नृत्तं नृत्यं चार्थः । यत्कारिषु नर्तकव्यपदेशः । पदार्थाभिनयो नृत्यम् । गात्रविक्षेपमात्रं तु नृत्तम् । See my *Theatric Aspects of Sanskrit Drama*, pp. 24-25.
2. Cf. रम्भाभिसारं कौबेरं नाटकं ननृतुस्ततः ॥ *Harivaṁśa*, Cr. Ed., BORI, Vol. II, Appendices, p. 345; also, सट्टअं नच्चिदव्वं । *Karpūramañjarī of Rājaśekhara.*
3. नाटकमिति नाटयति विचित्रं रञ्जनाप्रवेशेन सभ्यानां हृदयं नर्तयति इति नाटकम् । *Nāṭyadarpaṇa* I. 5. prose *vṛtti.*
4. *Mālavikāgnimitra* I. 4b : रुद्रेणेदमुमाकृतव्यतिकरे स्वाङ्गे विभक्तं द्विधा ।
5. Cf. नर्तनं नाट्यमित्युक्तं स त्वत्राभिनयो भवेत् । *Saṅgītaratnākara* 7.18.
6. *Daśarūpaka* I. 9 : अन्यत् भावाश्रयं नृत्यं नृत्तं ताललयाश्रयम्
   आद्यं पदार्थाभिनयो मार्गो देशी तथा परम् ॥

   See *Avaloka* on this for further explanation.
7. Cf. *Avaloka* on *Daśarūpaka* I. 7 : यथा च गात्रविक्षेपार्थत्वे समानेऽपि अनुकारात्मकत्वेन नृत्ताद् अन्यन् नृत्यं तथा वाक्यार्थाभिनयात्मकात् नाट्यात् पदार्थाभिनयात्मकम् अन्यदेव नृत्यम् इति ।

8. Cf. *Nāṭyaśāstra* I. 119 :
   योऽयं स्वभावो लोकस्य सुखदुःखसमन्वितः ।
   सोऽङ्गाद्यभिनयोपेतो नाट्यमित्यभिधीयते ॥
9. See my *Bharata Nāṭya-Mañjarī* ch. on *Pūrvaraṅga* and Introduction , pp. LIV-LXXIV.
10. *Ibid.* Introduction, Section on *Abhinaya*, pp. LXXIV-XCIII.
11. *Ibid.* Introduction, pp. XCIX-C.
12. See my *Theatric Aspects of Sanskrit Drama*, Section 3 on "Drama Production Techniques".
13. See the article, "Unusual Character of Act IV in Vikramorvaśīya".

22

A PERSPECTIVE ON NĀNDĪ

[1]

Sanskrit Drama opens with a benedictory prayer known as *nāndī* Such a religious and musical opening of a dramatic performance has been the feature of the vernacular drama also, in India, especially in the early stages and when the theme was Puranic or social and was treated with a musical element. The feature goes back to the *pūrvaraṅga* of Bharata. The objective here is to study the original form of *nāndī* and its development or transformation through the period of classical Sanskrit drama.

The authentic and theoretical statement about *nāndī* occurs in the *Nāṭyaśāstra* (NS) of Bharata, in the context of the mythical origin of drama and its first performance; and its definition and characteristics are given in the fifth chapter on Pūrvaraṅga. After the end of the Tretā Age, social life of the peoples started deteriorating. Vulgarity and immorality prevailed. Wayward tendencies came to dominate general behaviour. The Vedas could exercise a sober influence; but the lower castes were prohibited the reading or hearing of the Vedas. There was no means which could instruct and entertain people and which was open to all classes and castes. In this predicament the denizens of all the worlds, under the leadership of Mahendra, approached the Creator God Brahmā, and requested him to produce a play-thing (*Krīḍanīyaka*) which could both be *seen* and *heard* and which, while providing a happy diversion, would keep people away from wicked and vulgar things. It was in response to this request that Brahmā took some

element from each of the four Vedas and created *nāṭya* as the fifth Veda. Brahmā handed over the nāṭya-veda to the sage Bharata and asked him to give a performance of the *nāṭya* with the help of his pupils and the celestial nymphs.[1]

The mythical origin and divine source of drama are probably intended only to stress its sacrosanct character and its great importance for people. The description of the first performance, also given in the NS.[2], is however more relevant for the present study. Bharata arranged the performance on the slope of the Kailāsa mountain and it was witnessed by all gods and demons, with Śiva as the guest of honour. The themes were *Amṛtamanthana* and *Tripuradāha*, both heroic, depicting the conflict between gods and demons and culminating in a victory for the gods. Bharata presented the dramatic themes with the help of *anukṛti*, that is to say, by physical movements and gestures (*āṅgika abhinaya*) imitating the happenings. Before this mime there was *pūrvaraṅga* in which *nāndī* featured. The procedure adopted for dramatic presentation here has thus two aspects :

(*a*) Preliminaries including *nāndī*, and

(*b*) Mimetic presentation of the dramatic theme.

[2]

The preliminary performance or the *pūrvaraṅga* is elaborately described in the fifth chapter of the NS. It consists of 19 items; 9 of which are preparatory and are done 'behind the curtain', that is to say, not presented to the spectators; the other 9 are done 'outside the curtain', are presented to the spectators. Between the two sets of presented and not presented items, is a full musical performance called *gītavidhi*, and the first of the presented items, *utthāpanī dhruvā* or the *dhruvā* song is sung in the same musical pitch in which the *gītavidhi* is performed. The order of these presented item is : *utthāpanā, parivarta, nāndī*. Thus, *nāndī* is the third of the presented items of the *pūrvaraṅga* or the 13th item, if the earlier un-presented items and intervening *gītavidhi* are to be counted from the beginning of the *pūrvaraṅga* performance.

When the preparatory items are over, the *pūrvaraṅga*

performance is presented to spectators with *utthāpanā*. This is a *dhruvā* song, meaningless words sung in specific musical pattern and rhythm beat. This is followed by the second item *parivarta*, in which the Sūtradhāra enters the stage with his two *pāripārśvikas* or assistants, worships the *Brahma-maṇḍala* in the centre of the front stage (*rāṅgapīṭha*), and moving in all the directions with rhythmic steps offers salutations to the four deities of the four quarters. Then the Sūtradhāra moves back to the centre of the back stage (*raṅgaśīrṣa*), with the *pāripārśvikas* on either side, and strikes a pose. The next item, *nāndi*, is to commence at this stage.

The nature of *nāndī* is thus described by Bharata[3]:

āśīrvacana-saṁyuktā stutir yasmāt prayujyate /
Deva dvija-nṛpādīnām tasmān nāndīti saṃjñitā //

The definition states that *nāndī* is a benediction, a statement of blessings. In order that a dramatic performance should come to a successful close, that during the performance neither the actors nor the spectators should meet with any impediments or obstacles, that giving and seeing the performance should bring a sense of pleasure to actors and audience and should give them, if possible, a kind of a spiritual satisfaction, it is essential that the auspicious and divine powers bless it. The Indians believe in this, having faith in divine blessing and protection. And the blessing in this case is to come from gods, brahmins, the ruling king; the word *ādi* in the definition implies the master of the playhouse, the poet, the producer, whose good wishes are necessary for the unspoiled success of the performance. The blessing presupposes naturally a praise and prayer addressed to gods, brahmins and the king; and so, the *nāndī* verse (s) are expected to contain the praise of gods and eulogy of king and brahmins and other holy things. Pleased by the praise the gods and others will give blessings; the blessings in their turn will provide a protective cover; and thus the entire performance will be free from interruption or obstacle of any kind. Such sentiment and faith underlie the *nandī*.

The words *nityam prayujyate* in the definition mean that the *nāndī* is to be performed always, for every dramatic

presentation, and without fail. It also means that the form and character of the *nāndī* are *nitya*, fixed. Praise addressed to gods and prayer for blessings and protection will be its invariable content. This shows that a fixed type of *nāndī* could easily be used, whatever the dramatic performance may be that is presented. This is corroborated by another statement that comes in the NS.

Bharata says that the *nāndī* is a recitation assigned to the Sūtradhāra[4] :

The verb *paṭh* implies, first, that the Sūtradhāra will recite the *nāndī;* secondly, the *nāndī* is his *pāṭha*; that is to say, they are the verses of praise and prayer which are traditionally handed down, which are committed to memory, which are in possession of the performing actors, and which the *Sūtradhāra*, as the master and the director of the dramatic show, is to use at the commencement of a performance in presenting the *pūrvaraṅga* item. Whatever be the drama taken up for production; whatever be the number of its performances; whatever be the time or place of its performance: the traditionally fixed *nāndī* will always be presented in identical form by the Sūtradhāra, like some religious and holy *mantras* which can always be recited for blessings and protection. That this could really be done is borne out by the actual example of *nāndī* verses that Bharata gives in the NS. a little further.

Apart from this meaning of *nityam prayujyate*, one or two other possibilities could also be considered : The Sūtradhāra may be using the *nāndī* given in the NS itself, or a similar one modelled on Bharata's verses, which he may have learnt from traditional teachers of dramaturgy; or if the Sūtradhāra possessed some poetic ability he could compose his verses after Bharata's model, and use them for all his dramatic performances. *Nitya prayoga* and *pāṭha* suggest all these possibilities, which point to the use of an identical form of *nandī* for all dramatic performances, whether it is Bharata's own or modelled on it by the traditional Nāṭyācāryas or by the Sūtradhāra.

The word *paṭhet* and the idea of *nāndī-pāṭhya* are likely to be misunderstood. In spite of the idea of fixed recitative

text present here, it must be remembered that the *nāndī* was sung. The phrase *madhyama-svaram-āśritaḥ* in the NS. verses referred to above (V. 104) makes the point clear. Among the seven notes which make the *svara saptaka* (*ṣaḍja, riṣabha, gāndhāra, madhyama, pañcama, dhaivata, niṣāda*), it is the *madhyama svara* which the Sūtradhāra uses as the basic pitch to sing the *nāndī*, making the *saptaka* from *ma* to the next *ma* in the higher scale. This means that the *nāndī* is sung in a very high tone. This was the practice on the Marathi stage too which took its beginnings from the Sanskrit drama. And there is a reason for such a rendering. For one thing, the song and the words of praise and prayer must reach all the audience, including those sitting in the last row farthest from the stage. Further, it is believed since Vedic times that gods love music and so the musical prayers must be loud enough to reach them. This is done in the recitation of *mantra puṣpa* verses even now; and it is this belief that appears to have governed the rendering of *nāndī* in high and loud pitch.

Another detail which the NS. provides is that the *nāndī* comprises 8 or 12 *padas*. The exact meaning of *pada* as Bharata intended it will not be appreciated unless the *nāndī* verses given by Bharata himself are carefully examined. They are as follows[5] :

> "*Namo stu sarva-devebhyo dvijātıbhyaḥ śubham tathā* /
> *Jitam Somena vai rājñā śivam go-bhrāhmaṇāya ca* //
> *Brahmottaram tathaivāstu hatā brahmadviṣas tathā* /
> *Praśāstv-imām Mahārājaḥ pṛthivīm ca sasāgarām* //
> *Rāṣṭram pravardhatām caiva raṅgasyāśā samṛddhyatu* /
> *Prekṣākartur mahān dharmo bhavatu brahmabhāṣitaḥ* //
> *Kāvyakartur yaśaś cāstu dharmaś cāpi pravardhatām* /
> *Ijyayā cānayā nityam prīyantām devatā iti*" //

Looking at these *nāndī* verses of Bharata and understanding their meaning it becomes apparent that Bharata intended *pada* to denote each of the intermediate clauses or sentences that make up the *nāndī* verses. This meaning becomes undoubtedly clear when the direction that Bharata further gives regarding

the procedure of *nāndī* recitation is taken into consideration. Bharata states that in between the two *padas* of *nāndī* the assistants of the Sūtradhāra are always to respond with the words, "Be it so, Sir" (*Evam astu, Ārya*). The singing of the *nāndī* was begun jointly by the Sūtradhāra and the two pāripārśvikas ; but later the Sūtradhāra alone did the rendering, and the assistants were to respond continuously at regular intervals. When one *pada* was over, for example, *namo stu sarvadevebhyo*, and before the next *pada* was rendered, the assistants were to utter the words, *evam astu, Ārya* ! and this procedure applied to all the 8 or 12 (Bharata's example has 12) *padas* of which the *nāndī* consisted. It is obvious, therefore, that *pada* denotes for Bharata, an intermediate clause or sentence. Abhinavagupta[6] understands and confirms this meaning.

This is how Bharata defines *nāndī* and describes its nature, form and the procedure of its recitation. The object of this recitation may be apprehended in the context of the *pūrvaraṅga* of which it is a part. The *pūrvaraṅga* seems to serve a threefold purpose as a preliminary to a dramatic performance.

There is obviously a religious purpose here. The worship of the deities connected with the playhouse, the stage, the dramatic performance and actors, salutations to them, singing their praises and addressing prayers to them with a view to seeking their blessings, and thereby obtain protection against possible obstacles and success for the performance : these are the evident motives behind the ritual worship and recitations which are included in the *pūrvaraṅga*. The *nāndī* as a prayer is one symbol of this religious purpose. That is why it contains allusions to god, brahmin, moon, cow etc. which are holy and auspicious.

In latter dramatic theory, the *nāndī* is described as containing words of blessing, as pleasing to the gods, as an auspicious means of securing protection and removing odds and obstacles[7]. It will be clear now that the source of these śāstric ideas is the original conception of Bharata, which later theorists have paraphrased. But Bharata's *nāndī* also contains ideas about the prosperity of religion, enriched glory to

theatrical presentation and success for the poet and the actors. We will turn to these ideas further on.

The second purpose of the *pūrvaraṅga* is the musical entertainment. The accompaniment of instrumental and vocal music to the dramatic performance is a necessary part of stage representation. The preparations for this accompaniment are done in the first half of the *pūrvaraṅga*. There are also some musical exercises that are worked out here, as music accompanies presentation of many items in the second half of the *pūrvaraṅga*. The pleasure and entertainment provided by music are obvious ; and *nāndī*-singing contributes its own share in this direction.

The third purpose is psychological. Men of importance like the king, his officers and others who carry prestige in society are not likely to be present in the playhouse quite early before the performance starts. as ordinary spectators would do. The prestigious audience would attend to their own business and come to the theatre on time, usually a little late, not caring for the preliminaries. In order that this important, though small, section of the audience may not miss any part of the main dramatic show, the preliminaries of the *pūrvaraṅga*, the ritual worship, prayer, even the *nāndī*-song, could be extended to await their arrival. The preliminaries thus could help to fill up time, and the pleasing music (if not, the ritual worship) could keep the assembled spectators sufficiently interested and entertained till the drama opened with its first 'scene'. This is not as significant a purpose as the auspicious prayer and musical entertainment are ; but the possibilities of extending the *pūrvaraṅga* and its psychological value are evident. The history of the later vernacular drama performances bears out the fact that the *nāndī*-singing was extended to await the arrival of an important guest of honour.

[4]

Turning from Bharata's *nāndī*, with all its implications and objectives, to the actual *nāndī* verses found in the classical Sanskrit dramas from Kālidāsa onwards, with a probable

exception of the Bhāsa plays, one cannot fail to note some striking variations. The classical Sanskrit drama invariably opens with a *nāndī* ; but the *nāndī* verses of the classical dramatists are not identical with those presented in the NS. First, there is certainly a salutation to the deities ; but whereas Bharata refers to all the gods in a general way, the *nāndī* in the classical plays is a prayer addressed to different and particular deities mentioned by name. Kālidāsa's *nāndī* verses refer to Śiva. Bhavabhūti mentions Vināyaka in the *nāndī* verse of his *Mālatīmādhava*, and in a rather amusing description alludes to the fright and confusion of the god Vināyaka—Gaṇeśa, as Śiva's serpent, seeing Kārtikeya's peacock, entered his trunk for shelter ; the confused twistings and wavings of the trunk by Vināyaka are invoked here for protection. Viśākhadatta refers to the pleasing, amorous deception of Pārvatī by Śiva and to the latter's *tāṇḍava* performance. In one of the three verses of the *nāndī*, Bhaṭṭa Nārāyaṇa mentions the love dalliance between Viṣṇu and Lakṣmī. Thus, the classical writers seem to refer to different and particular gods, ostensibly of their own choice, and instead of merely describing or praising a god, conceive sometimes a situation or an incident as well. This is obviously a departure from Bharata's *nāndī* verses, although salutation to a deity is an aspect that is adhered to.

Another variation is in regard to the structure of the *nāndī*. For Bharata a *nāndī* is to comprise 8 or 12 *padas*, where *pada* definitely meant an intermediate clause or sentence, as explained earlier. This meaning of *pada* is almost completely lost in the *nāndī* verses of classical dramatists. For example, Kālidāsa uses one verse of four lines in *Śārdūlavikrīḍita* or *Sragdharā* metre for his *nāndī* ; Śrī Harṣa and Bhaṭṭa Nārāyaṇa have three verses each, in different metres ; Bhavabhūti uses one verse in long metre, and in the *Uttara-rāma-carita* only a single verse in *Anuṣṭubh*. The dramatists have not only varied the length of the *nāndī* verses, generally speaking, but have also used different classical metres to suit their convenience, although occasionally the old *Anuṣṭubh* is seen

Of course, these are not complete departures but

variations But considering the respect for authority and tradition that prevails in the Indian atmosphere, they need an explanation. What the commentators of Sanskrit dramas do is somehow to justify the variations and reconcile them with tradition or some theoretical formulation, as we will see. However, such an explanation would not satisfy those who have Bharata's conception and example of *nāndī* before them, along with the *nāndī* verses of classical dramatists.

A true explanation must be sought, I think, in the *pūrvaraṅga* performance of which *nāndī* was a part, and what happened to it in the course of time. The account in the NS. of the first or early performances of *nāṭya* is quite suggestive in this respect. At this early stage, the dramatic plot or story was conveyed to the spectators mostly through mimetic acting, imitating the happenings by movements and gestures. For such a performance music, dance and songs were essential not only as an accompaniment but also for entertainment and as fillers of time. If there was any spoken dialogue at all, it must have been very little and probably improvised to suit the action or happenings in the story. That is why, the elaborate *pūrvaraṅga* which Bharata describes was absolutely necessary to fill up the whole programme and as an assured part of entertainment and pleasure. But in course of time, the dramatic plot came to be written in neat dialogue, which the actors could learn by heart and recite while performing a play. At this stage, the movements and gestures, the entire reportoire of *āṅgika abhinaya* would be an additional means to convey the moods and emotions and actions, the sense being already conveyed through the spoken word of the dialogue. Gradually, thus, as the script of the dramatic story in dialogue form started being available, the necessity of presenting an elaborate *pūrvaraṅga* to fill up time and to entertain naturally dwindled. Besides, if the actors were to be too tired in presenting the *pūrvaraṅga*, they would not be able to play their roles in the actual dramatic performance with sufficient energy and enthusiasm and would not do full justice to the poet-dramatist's content. It is significant to note that Bharata himself foresaw this development and suggested that the *pūrvaraṅga* may not be unnecessarily

extended in the interests of dramatic performance and audience entertainment.[8]

The elaborate *pūrvaraṅga*, thus, came to be curtailed in the changing circumstances. Apart from Bharata's own suggestion to do so, the available classical plays too do not show the lengthy *pūrvaraṅga*. And the Sūtradhāra in the prologue of these plays almost invariably warns the performers to cut down any time-consuming prolixity (cf. *alam ati-vistareṇa*). A short preface to the performance in the form of *prastāvanā* is all that seems to have survived from the old *pūrvaraṅga*. Some later theorists have taken cognisance of this evolution and change in their own way. These theorists, with due respect to Bharata and the old tradition refer to the *pūrvaraṅga* but do not describe its 19 items elaborately as Bharata did. The authors of *Nāṭyadarpaṇa* mention the *pūrvaraṅga* and state that people are generally aware of the preparatory items needed for a dramatic performance ; items connected with ritual worship, recitation and salutations to deities pertain to the religious beliefs of the people and if used, are only a concession to religious sentiment ; we, the authors say, will not mention those items therefore, and describe only such items as *nāndī*, *prarocanā* etc. which are directly relevant to the dramatic performance.[9] Viśvanātha says in his *Sāhityadarpaṇa* that the *pūrvaraṅga* comprises many parts, but of them *nāndī* alone must be performed in order to avoid obstacles and avert evil.[10] The theory and practice of Sanskrit drama, thus, furnish some clear evidence of the evolution, curtailment and change of the elaborate *pūrvaraṅga* ; and it is evident that the *nāndī* too went through this process of variation.

The development of *nāṭya* on the literary side, the entire plot or story being composed in dialogue, led to the gradual curtailment of the *pūrvaraṅga*. But the variations came, as one can see, through the dramatists themselves, who took over, as one would expect, the preliminaries also in their hand and shaped them in the way they wanted them.

The *pūrvaraṅga* was cut down ; but it was not altogether dropped ; it could not be, considering the old times and the psychology of the people. The preparatory items, the elaborate

ritual, worship and salutations, and the items of song and dance included partly as religious element and partly as entertainment could be dropped in the changing circumstances. But the religious bent of mind of the Indian people would not allow dropping salutation to deities and pious blessings altogether. No activity can meet with success without divine protection and blessing. Nāṭya too is a form of worship, or 'a visible sacrifice offered unto the gods', as Kālidāsa would say.[11] And so, out of the several items of religious nature in the old *pūrvaraṅga*, *nāndī* remained as a necessary preliminary and as representative of religious worship. It was expected by dramatists, actors and audience that a performance began with proper religious prayer and blessing. The later theory simply echoes this sentiment.[12]

Like the auspicious *nāndī*, it was also necessary to use music and songs to attract the audience to the performance and to please them. It was equally necessary to flatter the spectators and appeal to them for undivided attention. Hence music or song, *saṅgīta* and *prarocanā* were necessary items, even in the changing circumstances. Similarly, it was necessary to introduce the poet and his play, and this could be done only before the performance proper commenced, because there were no other means of publicity in the old days All these items, therefore, had to be preserved from the old *pūrvaraṅga*. Only, they could be presented not exactly as Bharata did. The dramatists could do all the necessary preliminaries in their own way, preserving the *spirit* of Bharata's precepts ; and that is exactly what they seem to have done. The present *prastāvanā* of a Sanskrit drama is a heritage from Bharata's *pūrvaraṅga*, adapted with necessary variation and modification by the dramatists themselves.

In other words, the inevitable evolution and modification of the *pūrvaraṅga* in consonance with the changing times, the development of drama on the literary side, and the dramatists taking over to themselves the traditional function of religious preliminaries and introduction of the play and playwright, instead of letting the Sūtradhāra and his actors do it in the old traditional way ; these are the causes that would explain satisfactorily the variations in the *nāndī* and the nature of the

current *prastāvanās* of the existing plays. Such an explanation is not always forthcoming from the Sanskrit commentators.

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Thus, the *nāndī* in the classical Sanskrit plays is not Bharata's *nāndī* ; it is the dramatist's own *nāndī*, composed by him, but modelled on Bharata's or on a traditional example. A *nāndī* has to have praise of deities, a benediction or blessing, a prayer for protection against evil and so on. The dramatists adhered to this principle of *maṅgala* and *āśīrvacana*, but varied the content according to their own desire. Instead of a general mention of all the deities they composed a prayer, a *maṅgala*, in praise of their own favourite deity. As a matter of fact, in the *raṅgadvāra* item of the old *pūrvaraṅga*, that came a little after the *nāndī* item, a verse in praise of the deity of the festival, the king's own favourite deity etc. had to be presented. The dramatists now did this in their *nāndī* verse by offering a prayer to their own *iṣṭadevatā*. The mention of several different deities in the *nāndī* verses and their varying content is therefore to be explained by understanding that the *nāndī* in the classical plays is an individual creation of a dramatist.

This is equally true about the structure of the *nāndī*. Bharata's precept that the *nāndī* should comprise 8 or 12 *padas* was not a rule but a recommendation ; and moreover, it was connected with a particular procedure of presenting the *nāndī*. Evidently, this procedure, *viz* , the Sūtradhāra reciting one *pada* or verse-statement, and the assistants giving an appropriate response, must have come to be dropped as needlessly elaborate, although the *nāndī* continued to be sung in a high pitch. The exact number of *padas*, therefore, did not really matter, and the dramatists have not attended to the exact number of *padas* traditionally given. But instead of recognising this simple fact, the theorists and commentators sometimes merely repeat Bharata's precept or attempt at explaining a *nāndī* verse somehow. Rucipati, the commentator of *Anargharāghava*, for example, says that *pada* here means 'an inflected word or the line of a verse'. This is not

Bharata's meaning of *pada*, as we know. But even this explanation would fail to account for the required number of *padas* in some *nāndī* verses. Rucipati has the audacity to say that a *nāndī* of 25 *padas* is always blissful, provided it is in honour of Śiva, and Bharata has so ordained ![13] Rucipati's desire to justify his dramatist somehow is understandable ; but his theoretical bluffing is unnecessary The simple fact is that all the dramatists have not followed the direction regarding the precise content and the number of *padas* of the *nāndī* ; changing the meaning of *pada* or inventing traditional authority for a variation may be a way of harmonising the differences, but it cannot be a satisfactory explanation of things.

As a matter of fact, it is often noticed that while evolutionary changes are taking place, a tendency to revert to the original orthodox pattern is sometimes manifested. Some theorists, for example, during the classical period, while following the direction of Bharata, defined *nāndī* so as to include a reference to moon, conch, cow, brahmins etc.,[14] because these are auspicious things and Bharata's definition certainly implied that *nāndī* is a benediction suggestive of auspicious blessings. Some dramatists like Śrī Harṣa composed their *nāndī* with three verses so as to have 12 quarters or *padas* and carefully brought in the content references to moon and all the gods in general.[15] Commentators like Abhinavagupta who were thoroughly familiar with the original tradition have praised Harṣa for his adherence to Bharata's precepts and cited his *Ratnāvalī* as an ideal composition illustrating Bharata's dramatic theory. Such a tendency is noticeable in the performance of the *pūrvaraṅga* too. The classical dramatists adopted only the necessary items like the *nāndī*, introduction of the poet and his play *(kaviprastāva)*, an appeal to the audience (*prarocanā*), and the introductory device for opening the first scene (Bharata's *prastāvanā*) which they brought in their prologue and presented through the Sūtradhāra and *naṭī* or an assistant. Yet in actual performance of plays, a local, regional usage (*pravṛtti*) went back to the old elaborate *pūrvaraṅga* as in the case of the *Kūṭiāṭṭa* of Kerala and of the dance drama of Orissa and Assam.

However, with the evidence of the written Sanskrit drama before us it is not possible to ignore the differences and variations from the old standard, and the fact that the dramatists themselves must have been responsible for shaping them.

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As the dramatists took over the composition of the *nāndī* to themselves some other changes came naturally. The dramatists were careful to preserve the auspicious and benedictory character of the *nāndī*. It continued to be a praise and prayer addressed to the gods, and as a song of devotion it was expected to please the gods. The exegetists brought out this idea by describing the *nāndī* as suggestive of *maṅgala* and as a delight to the gods.[16] But the idea that the *nāndī* was a sort of divine protection against possible obstacles or evil came to receive a decided emphasis which was not there in Bharata's own *nāndī*. Some dramatists offered only salutations in the *nāndī*[17], but most of them invoked their favourite god to bestow protection on the assembled crowd.[18]

Another change was that some dramatists used the *nāndī* not only as an auspicious invocation and a prayer for blessing, but sought to bring veiled allusions to the principal characters or striking events in their dramatic story by the use of suggestive or equivocal words, making the *nāndī* suggest the dramatic plot. In consequence, the later theory formulated a new definition of *nāndī* :

> *Aśīr-namaskriyā-rūpaḥ ślokaḥ kāvyārthasūcakaḥ*
> *nāndīti kathyate .....*[19]

This is again a variation from Bharata's conception and it must be remembered that many dramatists like Kālidāsa do not intend their *nāndī* to suggest their dramatic plot. The effort on the part of the Sanskrit commentators to read hints of the dramatic plot in the words of every *nāndī* verse they are commenting upon is only an exercise in ingenuity and unprofitable erudition.

A careful study reveals that Bharata's very elaborate *pūrvaraṅga*, including the *nāndī*, underwent a natural, evolutionary change, with due omission of certain items not needed in the changed circumstances, and preservation of such items as were always necessary, although slightly modified by the dramatists to suit their own convenience. But in all this change and evolution, we find a respect for the old tradition and authority; for, in spite of the individual variations and omissions, the dramatists seem to have been careful in preserving the spirit, if not the form, of Bharata's precepts.

And this brings to our mind a significant omission from Bharata's model *nāndī*, which no scholar, so far as I know has noticed so far. The *nāndī* verses of Bharata include a praise of the ruling king; there is a prayer for the prosperity of the nation, glory and ascendency of religion, and for the well-being and happiness of all concerned. The *nāndī* verses of the extant classical Sanskrit drama do dot contain these ideas. The *nāndī* sticks to salutation and prayer for divine protection, and at the most suggestively alludes to the dramatic plot. In other words, these ideas are omitted from the *nāndī*. But, curiousty enough, these ideas are expressed, though not verbatim, in a verse which concludes the dramatic performance and which, in the later dramatic terminology, came to be known as the *Bharatavākya*. For example, many Bhāsa plays conclude with a verse expressing pious hope that the lion-king may continue to rule over the sovereign empire of the earth bounded by the ocean.[20] The words are an echo of Bharata's *nāndī* verses. In the *Bharatavākyas* of other classical plays there is a tribute paid to the king, there is a prayer for timely rain and prosperity, glory to brahmins and poets, and general well being and happiness for all. This suggests that in the process of evolution and change, the original *nāndī* of Bharata bifurcated into a benediction and a valediction : Salutation to deities, prayer for divine protection and general observance of religious worship, were the ideas expressed in the opening, benedictory verse called the *nāndī*; and the ideas about the happy rule of the king, prosperity of religion and the nation,

and the general well-being and happiness of the people found expression in the valedictory verse, which came to be called the *Bharatavākya*. There is no mention of such a valediction in the NS. and the term *Bharatavākya* is found only in the Sanskrit plays. A final prayer at the end of the dramatic performance must have therefore come in connection with the stage representation itself, and it became a feature of the Sanskrit drama through the entire period known to us. This final prayer marked the end of a dramatic performance. And now, we get a better perspective on the significance of the technical name. So far, the word has been explained in two ways[21]; (*a*) 'Words of Bharata', that is to say, in honour of Bharata, a tribute to the founder of dramaturgy; (*b*) 'Words of the actors', a prayer offered by all the actors, coming in their respective roles on the stage but in their individual capacity as actors; a kind of an expression of gratitude and satisfaction, a final bow. Now, it is possible to understand the term literally as 'Bharata's words', because what the valedictory prayer expresses are Bharata's own ideas expressed in his model *nāndi* verses in the NS., almost in identical words or as a paraphrase of his words. And the above two explanations may then be taken as an additional metaphorical sense, consistent with the general dramatic practice.

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There is one more point that may be discussed in connection with the *nāndi*, namely, the stage direction *nāndyante tataḥ praviśati Sūtradhāraḥ.* The direction presents a problem mainly in the context of the Bhāsa plays, because it occurs *before* the opening verse which we are accustomed to treat as *nāndi*. But if the Sūtradhāra, according to this stage direction, is supposed to appear on the stage after the *nāndi* is presented (*nāndyante*), what is the verse that immediately follows the direction in the Bhāsa plays? It is a puzzle, and it has engaged the attention of some Sanskrit commentators at least. Viśvanātha, the author of the *Sāhityadarpaṇa*, says that the opening verse in a play like the *Anargharāghava* or the *Vikramorvaśīya* is not *nāndi*; it is a *raṅgadvāra* verse.[22]

In Bharata's *pūrvaraṅga*, as pointed out earlier, the *nāndī* is followed by singing of a *dhruvā*, and then the *raṅgadvāra* verses are presented, in which a favourite deity and the *Jarjara* are praised and worshipped. Since the *devatāstuti* in the *raṅgadvāra* follows the *nāndī*, the particular stage direction (*nāndyante*) can be reconciled, so far at least as the time-sequence of items is concerned. But we know that the Sūtradhāra is already present on the stage and it is his responsibility to present the *nāndī*. Secondly, Viśvanātha's examples are not convincing; the stage direction in these plays does not come *before* the opening verse.

Rucipati, the commentator of the *Anargharāghava* suggests different explanations as follows[23] : (*i*) Bharata has mentioned a number of actors in connection with the stage performance. One of them is *Nandī* or *Nāndī*. And *nāndī*, therefore, means a musical recitation presented by this actor. (*ii*) Or, *nāndī* may have been presented by some one else; and the Sūtradhāra enters the stage after it is over. (*iii*) Or, the Sūtradhāra may himself sing the *nāndī* in the green-room (*nepathye*), behind the curtain so to say, not before the audience, and then come forward on the stage.

Singing the *nāndī* behind the curtain is known from the later, vernacular dramatic practice. And the possibility of two *nāndīs*, one the traditional and the other composed by the dramatist himself, may not be altogether ruled out. However, these explanations are not quite satisfactory. Abhinava's view seems to be preferable under the circumstances: Abhinava notices that Bharata uses the word *nāndīpāṭhakāḥ* in the plural. This suggests that the musical recital of *nāndī* was commenced by the Sūtradhāra and his two assistants together; a little later the Sūtradhāra alone took up the singing, since, presumably, the assistants were to utter the responsive formula of approbation after every *pada* of the *nāndī*. The procedure thus implies the commencement of *nāndī* by all the three *together*, and then by the Sūtradhāra *alone*. The dramatists write the stage direction as we find it in order to respect this chronological order of *nāndī* recital.[24]

This is quite plausible. But we know that the *pūrvaraṅga* underwent a change and a curtailment, and the procedure of

the assistants' response had no meaning when the *nāndī pada* itself lost its old meaning in the composition of the classical dramatists. The place of the stage direction *nāndyante* ...... must therefore be accounted for in the context of the evolution of the *pūrvaraṅga*. The Bhāsa plays belong to the pre-classical stage of Sanskrit drama and to an intermediate period of the evolution of the *pūrvaraṅga*; its first eleborate and full form being represented by the NS. and the final modified form by the *prastāvanā* of the classical Sanskrit plays from Kālidāsa onwards. In the intermediate period, some items of the *pūrvaraṅga* presumably were performed according to the old tradition; e.g. the introduction of the poet and his play, and the appeal to the audience, the old *trigata, prarocanā* and *kaviprastāva* which (last) Bhāsa assigned to the Sūtradhāra instead of Bharata's Sthāpaka, though he retained the old name *sthāpanā*. This is probably the reason why the author's name and that of the play is not found in the prologues of the Bhāsa plays. The *nāndī* may also have been rendered according to the old procedure. And Bhāsa's Sūtradhāra entered the stage to introduce the first scene. This would account for the stage direction occurring first in the Bhāsa plays. The verse then that follows this stage-direction is in part introduction of the play,—which Bhāsa does by weaving the names of the principal dramatic characters with a *double entendre*; and in part, the author's own *maṅgala* at the commencement of his poetic work. This may look like a double *nāndī*. But a repetition of the *maṅgala* would be welcome. And more significantly it is not merely a praise and prayer for protection but also an introduction of the play to be immediately performed[25].

In the classical plays, the stage direction appears after the dramatist's *nāndī* verse; and it means the Sūtradhāra *alone* now takes up the business of introducing the poet and the play, of appealing to the audience and of suggesting the opening scene by a suitable introductory device[26].

References

1. NS., Gaekwad's Oriental Series (GOS), Vol. I, ch. I. 12-19.

2. NS., GOS, VI. 9 ff.
3. NS. GOS. V. 24.
4. Cf. NS. GOS. V. 104 : सूत्रधारः पठेत् तत्र मध्यमस्वरमाश्रितः ।
5. NS. GOS. V. 105-108.
6. Cf. Abhinava's comment on NS. V. 109 (GOS ed. 2nd, revised, p. 237) :
   पदमत्र अवान्तरवाक्ययम् । तदन्तेषु एवमार्य इति । अन्तरशब्दो विशेषे । नान्दीपदविशेषे उक्ते इत्यर्थः ।
7. Cf. such statements as the following :
   आशीर्नमस्क्रियारूपः श्लोकः....।
   नन्दति देवता अस्याम् इति नान्दी ।
   तथाप्यवश्यं कर्तव्या नान्दी विघ्नोपशान्तये ।
   Cf. *Bhāvaprakāśana*, GOS., p. 197. *Sāhityadarpaṇa* VI. 236.
8. Cf. NS. GOS. V. 158-160 :
   कार्यो नातिप्रसङ्गोऽत्र नृत्तगीतविधि प्रति ।
   गीते वाद्ये च नृत्ये च प्रवृत्तेऽतिप्रसङ्गतः ।।
   खेदो भवेत् प्रयोक्तृणां प्रेक्षकाणां तथैव च ।
   खिन्नानां रसभावेषु स्पष्टता नोपजायते ।।
   ततः शेषप्रयोगस्तु न रागजनको भवेत् ।
9. *Bhāvaprakāśana* mentions the *pūrvaraṅga aṅgas* : GOS ed., pp. 194-199.
   See, *Nāṭyadarpaṇa*, GOS ed., p. 155.
   अस्य च पूर्वरङ्गस्य प्रत्याहारादीनि आसारितान्तानि नव अन्तर्जवनिकम्, गीतकादीनि प्ररोचनान्तानि च दश बहिर्जवनिकम् अङ्गानि प्रयोज्यानि पूर्वाचार्यैः । अस्माभिस्तु स्वतो लोकप्रसिद्धत्वात् तन्न्यासस्य च निष्फलत्वात् विविधदेवतापरितोषाख्यस्य तत्फलस्य च श्रद्धालुप्रतारणामात्रत्वात् उपेक्षितानि । प्ररोचना तु पूर्वरङ्गाङ्गभूतापि नाट्ये प्रवृत्तौ प्रधानमङ्गमिति लक्ष्यते ।
10. Cf. *Sāhityadarpaṇa* VI. 22.
    प्रत्याहारादिकान्यङ्गान्यस्य भूयांसि यद्यपि ।
    तथाप्यवश्यं कर्तव्या नान्दी विघ्नोपशान्तये ।।
11. Cf. *Mālavikāgnimitra* I. 4a.
    देवानामिदमामनन्ति मुनयः कान्तं क्रतुं चाक्षुषम् ।
12. Cf. Note no. (10).

13. Cf. Rucipati on *Anaragharāghava*, Kāvyamālā 5, Nirnayasagara, Bombay 1937; p. 8 ff.
पदं चात्र द्विविधिम् अभिप्रेतम सुप्तिङन्तं श्लोकपादाख्यं च ।
तदुक्तं नाट्यलोचनकृता-'सुप्तिङन्तं पदं चात्र श्लोकपादश्च वा पदम् ।'
इति । ...पञ्चविंशत्पदा नान्दी नित्यमेव शुभावहा ।
स्यान्नायकस्य कवेर्यदि शंभुविभूषिता ।।
इति भरताभिधानात् (?) ।
14. Cf. *Sāthityadarpaṇa* VI. 25.
माङ्गल्यशङ्खचन्द्राब्जकोककौरवशंसिनि ।
पदैर्युक्ता द्वादशभिरष्टाभिर्वा पदैरुत ।।
15. Cf. *Ratnāvali* I. 4.
जितमुडुपतिना नमः सुरेभ्यो द्विजवृषभा निरुपद्रवा भवन्तु ।
भवतु च पृथिवी समृद्धसस्या प्रतपतु चन्द्रवपुर्नरेन्द्रचन्द्रः ।।
16. Cf. the explanation : नन्दति देवता अस्याम् इति ।
17. For example, Bhavabhūti's *nāndi* verse in the *Uttararāmacarita*.
18. Compare the word *pātu* or *avatu* पातु/अवतु which is generally used in the *nāndī* stanzas.
19. Quoted by commentators and attributed to Mātṛgupta. The author of *Daśarūpa* (III. 4) has—
रङ्गं प्रसाद्य मधुरैः श्लोकैः काव्यार्थसूचकैः ।
20. Cf. इमां सागरपर्यन्तां हिमवद्विन्ध्यकुण्डलाम् ।
महीमेकातपत्राङ्कां राजसिंहः प्रशास्तु नः ।।
21. (a) भरतस्य वाक्यम् । भरतमुद्दिश्य सन्मानवचनम् इत्यर्थः ।
(b) भरतानाम् वाक्यम् । भरतानां रूपधराणां सामाजिकान् उद्दिश्य कृतज्ञतादर्शकं सन्तोषवचनम् इत्यर्थः ।
22. Cf. *Sāhityadarpaṇa*, VI. 22ff. एतन्नान्दीति कस्यचिन्मतानुसारेण उक्तम् । वस्तुतस्तु पूर्वरङ्गस्य रङ्गद्वाराभिधानम् अङ्गम् ।
23. Cf. Rucipati on the *Anargharāghava*, *op. cit.*, pp. 8-10.
ननु 'नान्द्यन्ते सूत्रधारः' इति असङ्गतम्। सूत्रधारपठनीया नान्दी, नान्दी—पाठानन्तरं च सूत्रधारप्रवेशः, प्रवेशान्तरं च पाठावसारः, इति अन्योन्याश्रयत्वात् । उच्यते—नान्दीनामा सूत्रधारः तदन्ते तन्निष्क्रान्तौ सूत्रधार इव सूत्रधारः स्थापकः प्रविशति इत्यर्थः । तदुक्तं भरते—'अथ पात्राणि तत्रादौ । 'नान्दी नान्दीं तु यः पठेत्' ।। इति । तत्रैव 'नान्दी प्रयुज्य निष्क्रामेत् सूत्रधारः सहानुगः । स्थापकः प्रविशेत् तत्र'... ।।...

यद्वा नान्दी अन्येन एव पठिता । तदन्ते सूत्रधारः प्रविशति । वदति च वक्ष्यमाणमिति शेषः । तथा च सङ्गीतकल्पतरुः – 'सूत्रधारो पठेन्नान्दीम् अन्यो वा रङ्गभूमिगः । मङ्गलं सूचयित्वा तु ललितेन शुभान्वितम् ॥' अपरे तु पटान्तरित एव नान्दीं पठित्वा सूत्रधारः प्रविशति वदति च, इत्याहुः ।

24. Cf. Abhinava on NS., GOS. Vol. I, p. 217. क्रमस्य सिद्धत्वात् नान्दिपाठका इति । तदुपलक्षितपूर्वक्रमद्वारेण एव पुराणकवयो लिखन्ति स्म 'नान्द्यन्ते सूत्रधारः' इति ।

25. It is possible that the *kāvyārthsūcana* idea in the conception of the *nāndī* may have gained currency from Bhāsa's dramatic practice. We know that Bharata did not expect a suggestion of the dramatic plot in the benedictory verses.

26. I have dealt with this problem at some length elsewhere. See my *Bharata-Nāṭya-Mañjarī*, Bhandarkar Institute publication, Poona 1976; Introduction pp. LXIX-LXXIV. Also, my *Bhāsa Studies*, Maharashtra Grantha Bhandar, Kolhapur 1968; Studies nos. V and IX, pp. 71-80 and 127-138

23

ĀMUKHA : PRASTĀVANĀ

According to the *Nāṭyaśāstra* (*NS*) the *sūtradhāra* performs the ritual, musical and entertaining *pūrvaraṅga* and when he has completed it, he makes his exit from the stage. At the end of the formal and technical *pūrvaraṅga* the introduction of the play in production, known as *kāvya prastāvanā*, is to begin. Another actor known as *sthāpaka*, who resembles the *sūtradhāra* in appearance and in qualifications, enters the stage in the role of *kāvya-prastāvaka*. His duties and performance are described in the same chapter of the *NS*, immediately after the description of the *pūrvaraṅga*; and Abhinava therefore rightly describes the *prastāvanā* as 'the remainder of the concluding part of the *pūrvaraṅga*[1]', suggesting thereby that it is also a part of the dramatic preliminaries leading to the actual performance. The stage business the *sthāpaka* is expected to perform comprises the following: (i) He performs movements attuned to music and rhythm (technically called, *cārī*) as a worship to *jarjara* (the ceremonial flag-staff) and then recites verses in honour of gods and brahmins. (ii) This ritual part over, he is to do *raṅgaprasādana* or to propitiate and please the deities of the theatre as well as the assembly of spectators by singing verses full of sweet and perfect words suggestive of different emotions. (iii) He is then to announce the name of the poet (*kavi-nāma-saṁkīrtana*) whose plays has been taken up for production. (iv) He has further to introduce the play by commending its special features (*kāvya-prakhyāpanāśrayā-prastāvanā*). This he may do by various introductory devices, so that the audience is carried right into the opening of the

composition and the play is, as it were, placed before them kāvyopakṣepaṇā).

The *NS* mentions *āmukha* once again as one of the four divisions of *bhāratī vṛtti*[2]. This *āmukha*, also known by the experts as *prastāvanā*, is a dialogue between the *sūtradhāra* and the *naṭī* (supposed to be his wife) or the *vidūṣaka* or the *pāripārśvika* (*sūtradhāra*'s assistant). The dialogue is purposeful because it is directed towards the activities of actors. It is carried on with various *speeches* which all relate to the play and its production. Sometimes the parties may speak plainly by mentioning the play taken up for performance directly; sometimes they may adopt the use of equivocal phrases or introduce the information by a series of statements and rejoinders.[3] This dialogue is an introduction to the play and it provides a suggestion of the opening scene in a variety of ways. The *NS* calls them 'limbs' or divisions of *āmukha*; and they are given as *uddhātyaka, kathoddhāta, prayogātiśaya, pravṛttaka* and *avalagita*.

This description of *āmukha-prastāvanā* by Bharata is reproduced almost verbatim in the later dramatic theory. Such a *prastāvanā* was quite necessary so far as Sanskrit drama production was concerned, because there was no other way of conveying the background information about the play, the poet and for taking the audience right through to the start of dramatic story. The matter of duplicatlon or repetition involved in the combined procedure of the preliminaries and the prologue may perhaps need an explanation. A careful scrutiny of the *pūrvaraṅga* items performed before the audience shows that *trigata*, a conversation piece among the *sūtradhāra*, his assistant and the *vidūṣaka*, was a vague but allusive and humorous mode for conveying some information about the play and the poet. The item that followed and which was the last in the technical *pūrvaraṅga* was *prarocanā*: this was an invitation by the *sūtradhāra* to the audience to witness the dramatic performance. It also contained an appeal, because the *sūtradhāra* used persuasive arguments to justify the spectators' interest in the performance; for this purpose the *sūtradhāra* referred directly to the theme, plot and hero of the play. This was another opporu-

nity to supply the background information. Further, the *sthāpaka*, in the *kāvya-prastāvanā* that immediately followed the *pūrvaraṅga*, performed the business of introducing the poet and the play. If the introduction in the *trigata* were to be ignorged because it was vague and at best only suggestive, the *prarocanā* and the *kāvya-prastāvanā* directly mentioned the play and the poet; the *sthāpaka* was certainly expected to do so. This is a duplication. Why then is *prastāvanā* or *āmukha* mentioned once again in connection with *bhāratī vṛtti* by the *NS* ?

Abhinavagupta is aware of duplication in this introductory procedure.[4] Commenting on the earlier passage, he observes that *prastāvanā* has two different aspects. The one in *pūrva-raṅga* is a technical performance; it is done by the *sthāpaka* or by some poet; the poet who composed the play has nothing to do with it. The second *prastāvanā* which is mentioned in the context of *bhāratī* and by the name *āmukha* is the poet-playwright's own. This dual aspect is applicable to other details also like *dhruvā* songs or *prarocanā*; so that the *sūtra-dhāra* may have a *prarocanā* in his *pūrvaraṅga* and the poet too may use a separate *prarocanā* of his own in order to make his own appeal and commendation to the spectators; for he has a right to introduce his play to them in his own way.[5] *Nāṭyadarpaṇa* (*ND*) which closely follows Abhinavagupta offers a similar explanation by distinguishing *sthāpaka kṛta-prastāvanā* and *kavi-kṛta-prastāvanā*.

It is obvious that the matter is connected with the evolution of *pūrvaraṅga*. In the initial stage, when the *pūrvaraṅga* was performed in full, the *sūtradhāra* and his actors had their own traditional and set method of performing items like *nāndī*, *prarocanā* and *prastāvanā*. In this procedure, there may have been an apparent duplication; but equally possibly the items may have been kept distinct. As mentioned earlier, *trigata* was a vague humorous way of referring to the production, without mentioning any names. The *prarocanā* could also be an appeal to the audience and a recommendation of the performance where the story or plot and the hero were mentioned without using any names.[6] And then the *sthāpaka* could introduce the play and the poet by their

names. A little repetition would do no harm to the preliminaries. But, it must be remembered that all these preliminaries were managed entirely by the actors themselves, at times with the help of a poet who was presumably a member of the dramatic troupe, as Abhinava's comment suggests; the writer of the play never figured in this business. The next stage in the evolution of the *pūrvaraṅga* was probably characterized by omission of some *aṅgas* from the preliminary performance. In the next stage still, while some *aṅgas* were performed in the old set way, some were prepared by the poet himself and given to the actors to be performed. This is probably the pre-classical stage observed in the Bhāsa-plays. The final stage of the transformed *pūrvaraṅga* and of the *prastāvanā* is to be seen in the classical plays, where the entire matter from *nāndī* to the end of *prastāvanā* is composed by the poet-playwright himself. Thus, the two *prarocanā*s and *prastāvanā*s of which Abhinava speaks belong to the evolutionary stages of the preliminaries. For some time certain items were presented according to the traditional and established procedure; but the poets too had started handling some items ; and when the poets took over to themselves the entire composition of the drama including *nāndī*, *prastāvanā* and such other preliminaries as *prarocanā* and *kavināma-saṁkīrtana* as were necessary, then the dual aspect must have totally disappeared[7].

In the observations of later theorists on this matter, some kind of ambiguity or confusion is noticeable. They seem to indulge in speculations without cognising the fact of the evolution of the *pūrvaraṅga* and of the obvious taking over of the preliminaries by the poets themselves. The theorists, for example, have ignored the innovation introduced by Bhāsa who assigned the duties of the *sthāpaka* to the *sūtradhāra* himself retaining, however, the name *sthāpanā* for the prologue according to the older tradition. The theorists use either of the names *sūtradhāra* or *sthāpaka* or both in the context of *prastāvanā*; and some later dramatists too use older terms, probably out of respect for old tradition.[8] Abhinava alone appears to have recognised tacitly the change in the procedure of presentation; for he observes that *sthāpaka*

is *sūtradhāra* himself in a new role.[9] To my mind, the *NS* is clear on the point. The duplication is also apparent; we have seen how *trigata*, *prarocanā* and *sthāpaka*'s *prastāvanā* could all be harmonised as preliminaries. It is also probable that the *NS* statement about the five kinds of *āmukha* is a full explanation of the earlier brief statement.[10] But, the construction of *āmukha-prastāvanā* as a conversation piece with *sūtradhāra* and *naṭī* or *pāripārśvika* anticipates clearly the hand of a playwright. In the old procedure, the *sthāpaka* did the introduction. This suggests that *NS* is aware of a dramatist's role in the entire production. This should not be surprising because the ten patterns of dramatic composition (*daśa-rūpaka*) which the *NS* describes could not be conceived of without the creative effort of a capable poet-playwright.

Bharata himself[11] and all theorists use the terms *āmukha* and *prastāvanā* as synonyms. Even in the earliest practice, the *kāvya-prastāvanā* appeared immediately after the *pūrvaraṅga* and it was a part of it or an extension of it. In the extant classical plays the prologue from *nāndī* to *nāṭyāraṁbha* (the opening scene) is one continuous piece of presentation and is called *sthāpanā* according to older terminology or *āmukha/prastāvanā* in the classical days and in theory. But, is it possible to assume a little difference between *āmukha* and *prastāvanā*, at least in their technical purpose ? I think, we may. For, while the *pūrvaraṅga* and *prastāvanā* merged in the handling by the poets, *nāndī* and sometimes *prarocanā* stood as the main representative of the ancient *pūrvaraṅga*. Then, the main business that was to be carried out in the *prastāvanā* was : an appeal to the audience, recommendation of the play by stating its finer points of interests, which is only a form of *prarocanā*; introduction of the play and poet, which is *kavi-nāma-saṁkīrtana*; then simulating responsive mood among the audience by complimenting them or by singing a song for their pleasure, which is *raṅga-prasādana*; and finally taking the audience right into the performance by suggesting the opening scene, for which Bharata has recommended some technical devices. In the actual preliminaries *nāndī* is the first item. The following items

may come in any order as the poet pleases; and they may be somewhat mixed too.[12] However, the end of the prologue is marked by a suggestion of the opening scene. All this preliminary business is carried out in a single continuous piece of conversation, mingled with occasional singing where necessary.

Yet a careful sifting would show that the present *prastāvanā* has three main parts : (i) ritual and auspicious beginning, *nāndī*; (ii) introduction of the play and the poet, recommendation of the performance and propitiation of the audience, which all could be covered by the new *prarocanā*; (iii) suggestion of the actual opening of the drama by one of the commended devices; that is probably *āmukha*, though not distinguishable from the *prastāvanā* as a whole, seems to serve the specific purpose of opening the dramatic performance through the suggestion of the opening scene.

This distinction is somewhat supported by the name *āmukha* itself. Abhinavagupta states that *āmukha* is so called because it extends up to *mukha-sandhi*, the first juncture in the actual play denoting the first phase of dramatic plot development. Here, only the beginning, a glimpse, the *face* of the dramatic plot as it were, is shown to the audience. But the *pūrvaraṅga* preliminaries are now dove-tailed to actual drama production: or the two are brought face to face. The implication is that this is what poet and the author of the drama attempts to do here; the actors' set business is over and what the audience are going to see now is the poet at work, may be through the actors[13].

ND follows Abhinava carefully and explains the point as follows: From *nāndī* to the suggestion of the opening scene is all a part of the preliminary and the prologue; and it must be distinguished from the drama proper. It is written by the dramatist and presented by the *sthāpaka* or the *sūtradhāra*. When the *sūtradhāra* is supposed to present the *āmukha*, the poet's activity starts from *mukha-sandhi*. But, when *sthāpaka* did it, he is to be understood as representing the poet. It is, thus, the dramatist's business (*kaver-vyāpa*r*aḥ*); the actor is to be taken as the dramatist's spokesmen. The drama proper is supposed on the other hand to be the actor's

business.[14] What is meant is, in the preliminaries and in the prologue, the poet speaks directly to the audience, through the *sūtradhāra* or the *sthāpaka*; and he can be personal or autobiographical. But, in the drama the poet cannot and does not speak to the audience; he must carry the story through the speeches of dramatic characters; so, this is called actors' business because they will play the characters and speak the lines written for them. The distinction that *ND* makes between the poet's and the actors' business is clear evidence for the evolution and transformation of the dramatic preliminaries and their eventual handling by the poets themselves. Further, it is equally clear that the *āmukha* takes the audience a little beyond introduction and right into the dramatic performance. *ND* states that *mukha* stands for *mukha-sandhi*; and *ā* may denote either 'limit' or 'inclusion'; so that *āmukha* may extend up to *mukha-sandhi* or *mukha-sandhi* may be included in *āmukha*, with the result that *āmukha* may go beyond the formal *prastāvanā*.[15] Although, therefore, *āmukha* and *prastāvanā* are virtually the same, there is a difference in their technical function. Bharata's statement about the five limbs of *āmukha* would suggest that, *while* prastāvanā *is a general and formal introduction of the play and the poet*, āmukha *is a particular introduction of the opening scene of the play.*

But, the theorists have not cared to state the technical difference between *prastāvanā* and *āmukha* and have treated the two terms as synonyms. This fact as well as the practical exigencies of plot-construction or a sense of creative freedom may have led some dramatists to take some liberty with the construction of the preliminary and opening part of a drama. Generally speaking, the classical dramatists maintain a formal difference between the prologue and the drama proper, using the *āmukha-prastāvanā* only for suggesting the opening scene. But, Bhavabhūti has apparently departed from this usual practice. His *prastāvanā* of the *Mahāvīracarita* is on the lines of the general classical trend; it is of the *prayogātiśaya* kind and indicates the characters who will open the first scene of the play. But, in the *Mālatīmādhava*, after the formal business is over, the *naṭa* mentions that the *sūtradhāra* will be playing the role of Kāmandakī and he himself that

of her pupil Avalokitā. There is a reference also to certain other arrangements required for staging the first act and to the characters involved in its scene. As the prologue concludes, the *sūtradhāra* and the *naṭa* proceed to assume their role in the drama and thus cease to be mere actors performing the preliminaries as an introduction to the drama. A similar thing happens in the prologue of the *Uttararāma-carita*. Immediately after the *nāndī* and introduction of the play and poet (*kavi-nāma-saṁkīrtana*) the *sūtradhāra* transforms himself into a dramatic character, a bard attending the coronation of Rāma, and mentions several things including the scandal about Sītā and its probable effect, which form an important background of the happenings shown in the first act. The objective of the play is also stated here. It is not suprising that a *prastāvanā* of this kind should puzzle editors, commentators and critics of Bhavabhūti's plays. However, what Bhavabhūti has done here is that he has ignored the formal distinction between *prastāvanā* and the drama proper, and has allowed the prologue to merge into the opening scene of the play. In both these plays, after the formal *prastāvanā*, an introductory scene (*viṣkambhaka*) could have been constructed for providing the necessary background to the main scene of the first act, as Kālidāsa does in the *Mālavikāgnimitra*; and in this introductory scene the necessary details of the *āmukha* or of the first *avasthā* and *sandhi* (like statement of *bīja* or the central theme) could have been woven. Instead, Bhavabhūti extends the *prastāvanā* beyond its formal limit and turns its latter portion into an opening or introductory scene of the drama itself. Among the commentators, I find only Vīrarāghava noticing correctly this departure of Bhavabhūti from theoretical requirements and established practice.[16] Probably it is needless to take the dramatist's deviation very seriously because it pertains to the introductory and opening part of a dramatic plot-construction. From a formal point of view, it may not be correct to blur the distinction between the formal opening of a drama and the opening of the dramatic plot itself, or between the playwright's part and the part of the actors, as *ND* would say. Yet, a writer may not be grudged

the convenience needed for his literary creation. It is equally possible that Bhavabhūti took this liberty because an *āmukha* may be extended theoretically beyond the formal *prastāvanā*, though it would have been desirable to designate it by the name of *āmukha*.

[2]

Five Varieties of Āmukha—Prastāvanā

The five 'limbs' of the *āmukha* are *uddhātyaka*, *avalagita*, *kathoddhāta*, *prayogātiśaya* and *pravṛttaka*. Bharata mentions them as five different ways in which a dramatist could suggest the opening of his play for the benefit of his audience.

(a) *Uddhātyaka* :

Following Abhinava's explanation, the word *uddhāta* is to be taken in the sense of a question, a query; the addition of the termination *ya* (Pāṇini, 4.4.98) gives the form *uddhātya*, meaning 'good in questioning', 'excellent query'; further addition of *ka* (Pāṇini, 5.3.73) result in *uddhātyaka*; and the final meaning is 'a group of words which form an appropriate answer to a query (which answer probably may not be easily known)'.[17]

Bharata defines *uddhātyaka* as one of the aspects of *vīthī* (*NS.* XVIII. 105-106) where questions and appropriate answers together form a picturesque series; they have not merely a decorative value (as a figure of speech or ornament) but also a dramatic quality. Bharata expects the *āmukha* to be performed with the use of some *vīthī-aṅgas* and so *uddhātyaka* and *avalagita* are brought over from *vīthī* into the *āmukha*. *Daśarūpaka* (*DR*) ignores these two and speaks of only three *aṅgas*. Other theoretical works like *Nāṭaka-lākṣaṇa-ratnakośa* (*NLRK*), *Bhāvaprakāśana* (*BP*) and *Rasārṇavasudhākara* (*RS*) do likewise, though they are aware of *vīthī-aṅgas*. *Uddhātyaka* occurs, according to Bharata, when meaningful words, that is, questions (whose answers may not be correctly known) put forward respectfully are joined with appropriate answers by others, that is, clever people.[18]

The example which Abhinava quotes from *Pāṇḍavānanda* is not verifiable as the play is lost. The verse quoted contains a series of questions and answers and they together suggest the story of the play, the principal characters, their experiences and qualities. The definition of *NLRK* is similar; and the example refers by questions and answers to the engaging qualities of a drama and to the particular play *Ratnakośa*.[19] The definition in *Sāhityadarpaṇa* (*SD*) is nearly identical with that of Bharata. But the example of *uddhātyaka* cited is from the opening of the *Mudrārākṣasa* where the *sūtradhāra*'s statement refers to the eclipse of *Candra* (moon) by Rāhu, and Kauṭilya, behind the curtain, understands it to mean the over-powering of Candra (gupta). This is a case where *sūtradhāra*'s words or the sense of his statement is misinterpreted and taken in a different sense. It really falls under the variety known as *kathoddhāta*. *BP* has actually used this illustration for this variety. *BP* defines *uddhātyaka* in the same way as *DR* does. It appears, therefore, that *SD* has misunderstood the nature of *uddhātyaka*. *SD*'s explanation, 'the words (used by the *sūtradhāra*) here have really a coherent sense; but the character entering the stage (Kauṭilya) interprets them in the light of the meaning he has in his mind and thereby gives them a different 'meaning', though true for *kathoddhāta*, is incorrect for *uddhātyaka*. The commentator's observation too that '*uddhātyaka* occurs when the *sthāpak*'s intended meaning is obscured by the meaning assigned to it by a character when making an entrance', though faithful to *SD*, is irrelevant in the present context.[20]

Bharata's intention is obviously different and it is clearly explained by Abhinava. *NLRK* follows this interpretation of *uddhātyaka*. *DR* defines it while discussing the sub-divisions of *vīthī* (III. 13-14). *DR* says that *uddhātyaa* shows two forms : (i) a series of ambiguous words and their synonyms; (ii) a series of questions and answers. The first occurs apparently as a *vīthī-aṅga*; the illustration cited is from the second act of *Vikramorvaśīya* (not found in the current version); but the second occurs as an aspect of *āmukha* and *DR* cites the same example from *Pāṇḍvānanda* which

Abhinava has used. *Uddhātyaka* must, therefore, be taken to comprise questions and answers; and in view of the theoretical position *SD*'s explanation and example of *uddhātyaka* must be rejected.

It appears that as an *aṅga* of *āmukha uddhātyaka* is expected to draw attention to the play taken up for performance by naming it, or by suggesting its plot, characters and their qualities. There is no question of *pātra-praveśa* here. This is one feature which distinguishes it from *kathoddhāta*. Another feature seems to be that whereas *uddhātyaka* uses question-answer mode, *kathoddhāta* uses equivocation of double meaning, which facilitates the second meaning relevant to the dramatic story (*kathā*), suggesting its opening.

Haas translates *uddhātyaka*, in the *vīthī* context, as 'abrupt dialogue'. Dillon uses the word 'opener'. In the light of the technical definition, I suggest 'inquiry leading to dramatic opening' or 'opening by inquiry'.

(b) *Āvalagita:*

This is another sub-division of *vīthī* which is borrowed and used as an *āmukha* device to suggest the opening scene of a drama. As defined by Bharata, *avalagita* occurs when some other matter (but pertinent to the drama) is included in the topic of dialogue and is thereby led to fulfilment.[21] The classical example of *avalagita* as a form of *vīthī* is quoted from *Ratnāvalī* act II by Abhinava: The *Vidūṣaka* is trying to divert Udayana's mind from his love-sick condition and is hoping that the portrait of Sāgarikā will please his eye. Udayana confesses his pleasure and also reveals his sincere love for Sāgarikā. This latter is unexpectedly included in the conversation about the portrait and thereby love (*śṛṅgāra*), which is the principal theme of the play, is set before us: this is what is dramatically achieved. This unexpected connection or close linking (*ava*+*lag*)of two matters is the feature of *avalagita*.

DR's definition is similar. But, *DR* assumes two forms of *avalagita* : the one business that is in hand is the *prastāvanā* the *sūtradhāra* is making; another business which is brought

into connection with it may either be relevant (*prastuta*) or not quite relevant or may be rather unexpected (*aprastuta*); and this is how *avalagita* may appear in two forms. By inclusion of some matter into the one or by the connection of two matters, something relevant is accomplished; as when Rāma sends Sītā away to the regions of Bhāgīrathi in order to fulfil the longing of a pregnant wife (*dohada*) and achieves at the same time another purpose of abandoning her ; this is *prastuta-kāryasiddhi*. An example of the second form of *avalagita*, namely, an accomplishment of an irrelevant or unexpected dramatic matter, is quoted from *Chalitarāma*, a play lost to us. Rāma expresses a desire to enter Ayodhyā bare-foot after learning about the loss of his father, and in doing so meets Bharata unexpectedly.[22]

These examples, however, are in the context of *vīthī* which is a graceful and picturesque mode of dramatic presentation. How *avalagita* could be used to open a dramatic story remains still to be considered. *BP* defines *avalagita* in a similar manner.[23] The example of 'including a relevant matter' is identical with that of *DR*, Rāma sending Sītā away to satisfy her *dohada* and accomplishing her abandonment thereby. That of 'including an irrelevant, unconnected matter' is given as Duṣyanta entering the stage against the background of the enrapturing song sung by the *nāṭī* in the *Śākuntala*. *SD* uses the same example to illustrate *avalagita*. This is *āmukha-prastāvanā* no doubt; but the illustration is used for *prayogātiśaya* variety by other theorists.

The overlapping and confusion that the examples create seems to stem from the fact that some of the theorists have failed to understand Bharata correctly or they have deviated from Bharata's idea of *avalagita* and have connected the entrance of a (*pātrapraveśa*) with it. Their commentators try naturally to justify the text on which they are commenting.[24]

Chronologically speaking *NLRK* may have started this trend. *NLRK's* definition of *avalagita* is 'a conversation or statement in order to suggest entry of a character'; and the example is Duṣyanta-*praveśa* in the *Śākuntala*.[25] *BP* and *SD* use Bharata's definition, but, quote the above example of

pātra-praveśa. This is, of course confusing. *ND*'s idea of *avalagita* is 'the accomplishment of some work (dramatic business) under the pretext of doing something different'. The example is fulfilling the *dohada* of Sītā and achieving with it her abandonment. *ND* reviews other opinions also. One such is that when a character entrusts his own work to some one else and sticks to some other work, we have an *avalagita.* The example is from the *āmukha* of *Kṛtyārāvaṇa* (a lost play) where the *sūtradhāra* entrusts the business of performing dramas to his wife and himself turns to other-wordly matters with a feeling of renunciation. Another opinion mentioned by *ND* is that of an automatic accomplishment of some other (unconnected) matter while doing what one has undertaken. This is illustrated from *Chalitarāma,* where Rāma refuses to enter Ayodhyā in his aerial car, walks on foot and (unexpectedly) comes across Bharata.[26] However, *ND*'s entire discussion is within the intended limits implied in the definition of Bharata.

It appears that the essential feature of *avalagita* is a sticking together or a connection of two things, namely, what the *sūtradhāra* is doing at the moment, and another thing that is going to follow immediately, either naturally or unexpectedly. The opening that is suggested by this device is that of *a happening* or *an incident*; and the idea of a character entering the stage may be left out, as other varieties of *āmukha* are actually planned to take care of it. If this were done, the views of *NLRK, BP* and *SD* about *avalagita* and the examples cited by them may not be considered at all. The commentators' explanations and their efforts at establishing the distinctive nature of *avalagita,* as they overlap *prayogātiśaya* and *pravṛttaka,* will appear to be equally unnecessary, though cleverly done.

Uddhātyaka and *avalagita* both suggest the opening of the drama by referring to some *dramatic happening* or to a part of the story. *Uddhātyaka* works the suggestion by naming the play or by alluding to the story and uses the mode of query or question-answer. By contrast, *avalagita* connects what the *sūtradhāra* is doing in *prastāvanā* with what follows immediately as a dramatic business or action. If characters

come into it that is incidental; because the suggestion of the *opening situation* or *incident* is really aimed at in these two modes.

Haas translates *avalagita* by 'continuance'; Dillon by 'link' ; Ghosh by 'transference'. May we paraphrase it as 'linked opening' ?

(c) *Kathoddhāta* :

Bharata defines *kathoddhāta* as 'that dramatic opening where a character enters the stage taking the cue from the words of the *sūtradhāra* or from the sense his words convey (to his own understanding)'.[27] This gives the two forms in which *kathoddhāta* may occur : One, where a character enters taking up the words (*vākya*) of the *sūtradhāra*. The example is from *Ratnāvalī*, I.6 where the *sūtradhāra*'s statement 'from another island...' etc., is used by Yaugandharāyaṇa to effect his first appearance and open the play. The meaning assigned by him to the words connects it with the major event of the play, the miraculous escape of Ratnāvalī-Sāgarikā from a ship-wreck. The example of the second form, where *vākyārtha* is the cue, is quoted by Abhinava from *Pratimā-aniruddha* which being lost is not verifiable. All theorists concur in their definition of this variety and the examples cited by them are almost the same. For the first form of *kathoddhāta*, the example quoted by every writer is the same as above from the *Ratnāvalī*. For the second *DR* quotes *Veṇīsaṁhāra*, I.7. The *sūtradhāra*'s good wishes, 'May the Kuru princes rest in peace', are challenged by the angry Bhīma (1.8) and this is his cue for stage appearance. *NLRK*, *ND* (III. 106a), *RS* and *SD* cite the same example. *BP* quotes from the *Mudrārākṣasa*; the *sūtradhāra*'s reference to the moon-eclipse is challenged by Kauṭilya as he connects it to Candragupta and his enemies. We must remember that the *sūtradhāra*'s words in both the examples are paronomastic or equivocal; and so the character about to enter the stage is able to carry their sense in his own way.

In this opening the emphasis is on *pātra-praveśa*. But the words or their sense by equivocation; and the challenge thrown out by the character relates to the dramatic story

and its major event. Abhinava, therefore, explains the same by saying that *kathā* refers here to the dramatic theme or plot, and this opening device helps to bring it up.[28]

Haas translates *kathoddhāta* as 'opening of the story'; Dillon as 'abrupt opening of the story'. The content of the definition implies, 'dramatic story-opening by appearance of character'.

(d) *Prayogātiśaya:*

This variety of drama opening occurs when the *sūtradhāra* himself uses in the production of his *prastāvanā* another 'production' or dramatic event and a character enters after it. Abhinava understands this as a connection of two happenings, what the *sūtradhāra* is engaged in doing in the performance of his *prastāvanā* and another dramatic happening. The important point is that the connecting and the consequent explanation are done by the *sūtradhāra* himself.[29] Abhinava's example is the opening of *Vikramorvaśīya*: The *sūtradhāra* is appealing to the audience for attention to the drama performance; he pretends to hear a sound coming from *behind the curtain*; he thinks it to be a cry of distressed birds; he then actually identifies it to be coming from a group of celestial nymphs who are crying for help as Urvaśī has been abducted; these characters then enter to open the play. *NLRK* follows Bharata's definition and his example is from *Svapnavāsavadatta* where the *sūtradhāra*, busy in appealing to the audience, hears an order to clear the way; a character expresses surprise; and the *sūtradhāra* explains the order and its reaction to suggest the appearance of Yaugandharāyaṇa dressed in ascetic's robes. The lines as quoted by *NLRK* are not found in the available version of the play; but, the situation is there; and it is also clear that *NLRK* is following Bharata and probably Abhinava also. *SD*'s definition is virtually identical with that of Bharata. The example is from *Kundamālā*. The *sūtradhāra* is calling his wife to take part in the dance performance; at the same time another event is taking place and some one says *behind the curtain*, 'Lady, please come down'. The *sūtradhāra* finds out what is happening and explains that Lakṣmaṇa is

requesting Sītā to alight from the chariot. The abandonment of Sītā in the forest and the entrance of Sītā and Lakṣmaṇa are here suggested to open the play. In all these examples two *prayogas* or happenings are brought together by the *sūtradhāra*; one what he is himself engaged in doing; another, a happening *behind the curtain* or off-stage, identified and explained by him, and used to suggest the appearance of a character or characters who open the play. This is *prayoga* within the *pvayoga* to open the drama with the entrance of particular character or characters.

Another trend is discernible in the later theory which apparently attempts at simplifying the device by curtailing reference to a happening off-stage and by making the *sūtradhāra* directly name the character that will appear to open the play. *DR*, for example, defines *prayogātiśaya* as 'the opening with the entrance of a character introduced (by the *sūtradhāra*) with the words, 'Here he is'. The example, as expected, is the opening of the *Śākuntala*, with the appearance of Duṣyanta mentioned by the *sūtradhāra*. This view is followed by *BP*, *ND*, *RS* (which quotes the opening of the *Mālvikāgnimitra* as an example). It will be seen, however, that even with this simplification, there still is *prayoge prayogaḥ* or a happening within a happening; and the *sūtradhāra* links the two and uses their similarity to indicate the character coming on the stage and opening the dramatic performance. The *sūtradhāra* in the *Śākuntala* is charmed and carried away by the beauty of the *naṭi*'s song ; this is one *prayoga* or happening which the *prastāvanā* is describing. Duṣyanta being drawn away by the fleeing deer is another *prayoga* or happening, as yet off-stage, which is an integral part of the dramatic story. The *sūtradhāra* explains his own absorption by comparing it to that of Duṣyanta. This indicates his immediate appearance on the stage and facilitates the opening of the play. The happening of Duṣyanta's chase which is supposed to be behind the curtain is neither mentioned nor announced through an explanation; and so a direct reference to the character (*eṣaḥ ayam*...) is to be made by the *sūtradhāra* by introducing a comparison, instead of by an explanation as when the second happening off-stage is

brought in by an actual mention Thus, there does not seem to be any essential difference between Bharata's mode and the other one indicated by the later trend.

Haas translates *prayogātiśaya* as 'particular presentation'; Dillon as 'excellent contrivance'. May I suggest 'dramatic opening by parallel happening and by character-name'?

(e) *Pravṛttaka :*

This kind of opening is had when a character enters against a specific time or seasonal background desired by the *sūtradhāra*.[30] The example to which Abhinava refers is the *sūtradhāra*'s description of autumnal season in the *Veṇīsaṁhāra*. The description mentions *dhārtarāṣṭrāḥ* or cranes; and all the adjectives being paronomastic the sons of Dṛtarāṣṭra or the Kauravas are suggested here and their annihilation too. This is followed by *BP*. But, I wonder how this could be a *pravṛttaka* type of opening, although a season's background is provided and the characters are also indicated. First, it is Bhīma and not Kauravas who enters to open this play. Secondly, the opening here is of the *kathoddāta* type (second form) which other theorists have convincingly illustrated. There cannot be two types of opening a dramatist may use in one *āmukha*. Thirdly, the *pātra-praveśa* is not effected immediately after seasonal description in this case. There is some further dialogue, then *kathaddhāta* type of opening, and then the entrance of character is suggested. It seems that Abhinava had no other clear example before him to illustrate this variety.

NLRK repeats the definition of Bharata. Later, it calls this variety by the name *pravartaka* and states tnat it occurs when the *sūtradhāra* has begun some action befitting the season and a character concerned in that reference enters the stage. The examole is cited from *Śarmiṣṭhā-pariṇaya*. The actor asks the actress to sing a song about spring season; she disagrees because it will cause distress to separated lovers; this is an introduction to the condition of Śarmiṣṭhā on the background of seasonal reference; and so it is the *pravartaka* or *pravṛttaka*. This is in keeping with Bharata's definition and the concept, on the whole.

NLRK also refers to alternative views. It appears that similarity of two actions was an adequate basis for this variety in the opinion of some thinkers. If an action similar to that which is to be performed (in the *prastāvanā* by the *sūtradhāra*) were introduced and it served to indicate the dramatic action or the entrance of characters, the opening was supposed to be of the *pravartaka* type. Illustrations used are: The *sūtradhāra*'s desire to follow his parents into the forest to serve them, as Jīmūtavāhana is indicated to be doing (*Nāgānanda*, I.4); the desire to undertake sea-voyage in *Puṣpa-dūṣitaka*; the effort to arrange a marriage, as Viśvāmitra is striving for the marriage of Rāma with Sītā (in some Rāma play). In this form, however, the reference to season (*kāla*) is lost altogether and what remains is a set of parallel or similar actions. But, such a similarity of actions is to be found in the *prayogātiśaya* variety too. The introduction in *Nāgānanda* is matched by that in the *Mālavikāgnimitra*. In addition, we find the name of the character introduced. It is more appropriate, therefore, to take these illustrations as falling under the *prayogātiśaya* variety.

DR, *BP*. *ND* and *SD* stick to the context of season which is used as a background for introducing a character. All of them quote an identical example from *Chalitarāma*: The verse describes *śarad* or autumn. Some significant epithets have a double meaning; they describe the autumnal season and are equally applicable to Rāma. Besides, there is a direct comparison made between *śarad* and Rāma; and that is how the introduction of the principal character is effected. Considering the trend of general opinion about the nature of this variety the divergent view mentioned by *NLRK* may be ignored.

Haas translates *pravṛttaka* as 'the entrance of a character'; Dillon as 'induction'. I suggest 'dramatic entrance through seasonal description'.

It now appears that, among the five varieties of *āmukha*, *uddhātyaka* and *avalagita* refer mainly to dramatic events or happenings; and the remaining three serve to introduce a character that starts the drama. These latter are quite distinct, each in its own way. In *kathoddhāta* a character enters picking

up and repeating the *sūtradhāra's* words or challenging his meaning as he understands it. In *prayogātiśaya*, two things are happening simultaneously or in close succession; one on the stage, namely what the *sūtradhāra* is doing; and the other off-stage which is connected with the dramatic story; the *sūtradhāra* explains it to the audience and thus introduces the character or characters entering the stage. Alternatively, he names the character who is off-stage and facilitates his immediate entrance on the stage. In *pravṛttaka* or *pravartaka*, a character is mentioned in the context of a seasonal reference and the similarity of description helps to introduce the character.

While discussing the varieties of *āmukha*, the theoretical texts have put forward some additional ideas. *DR*, for example, states that the *sthāpaka* performing the introduction may suggest the plot of the play (*vastu*), the central theme (*bija*), the opening situation (*mukha*) or the character who enters first at the opening.[31] These suggestions are illustrated from plays like *Udāttarāghava*, *Ratnāvali*, *Chalitarāma* and *Śākuntala* respectively. *BP* makes a similar statement and illustrates the suggestion of *vastu* from *Anargharāghava* of *bija* from *Veṇisaṁhāra*, of *mukha* from *Ratnāvali* and of *pātra* from *Śākuntala*.

We do find that these writers differ in their views in regard to some aspects of a play, a theoretical precept or interpretation of a particular example. Such differences may be due to difference in individual understanding or possibly due to a real break in dramatic tradition hailing from Bharata. It does not appear that these writers took critical cognisance of new plays that were being written and re-formulated some theoretical views in the light of new creative efforts. Respect for tradition abides. Hence, the differences are to be ignored or treated as individual opinions.

It was stated earlier that the *prastāvanā* was essential for the performance of Sanskrit drama. *RS* gives a few valuable ideas in this connection. *Nāndi* and *prastāvanā* indicate, states *RS*, the manner in which the dramatic performance should start. The *prastāvanā* is an introduction of the production and a statement about it. It is a channel, a

medium, the origin or the right place (*tīrtha*) for giving information about the drama. It is presented entirely by speech, or to use a technical phrase, in *bhāratī vṛtti*. Here, the *sūtradhāra* may well make use of persuasive appeal, indication of the opening scene, in striking and graceful language and a little humour in presenting his *prastāvanā*. Bharata has suggested these various devices for this purpose.[32]

But, it must be remembered that the various modes of *prastāvanā* as well as the varieties of *āmukha* are not compulsory precepts; they are recommendatory modes and devices which a dramatist could use considering the possibilities of his dramatic construction. We find generally the classical Sanskrit dramatists using *kathoddhāta* and *prayogātiśaya* varieties of *āmukha*; the other varieties are found used occasionally and in later dramatic works. *ND* observes in this regard that, 'Out of the several varieties to introduce a character to start the beginning of a performance, a single one which will be picturesque or exciting is to be used. Else, the use of all (or several) devices will take up a greater portion of the composition in merely introducing several characters and the main dramatic story as such will be ruined'.[33] The observation is quite pertinent.

References

1. See, *NS. GOS.* Ch. V, Śl. 166 ff., and for Abhinava's comments, 2nd revised ed., Vol. I, p. 249.
2. *NS. GOS.* Ch. XX, Śl. 27-31. *Bhāratī vṛtti* is verbal mode of presentation. What is to be presented to the audience is rendered with speeches, aided by appropriate and suggestive *abhinaya*. Its aspects are *prarocanā*, an argument and appeal to win the audience for success of the production; *āmukha*, introduction of the play and the poet; *vīthi*, graceful modes of delivering speeches; and *prahasana*, humorous mode of speaking for evoking laughter.
3. For definition and meanings, see, *NS. GOS.* Ch. XX. Śl. 30-31, and Abhinava's commentary on the passage.

4. Cf. comm. on *NS.* Ch. XX, Śl. 30 ff·, *GOS*, Vol. III, p. 93:
अन्ये त्वाहुः । पूर्वरङ्गाध्यायेऽपि या प्रस्तावना उक्ता सापि भारतीमेद एव इति किं द्वैविध्याभिधानप्रयासेन ।

5. On *NS.* Ch. V, Śl. 168-169, Abhinava writes:
द्विविधा प्रस्तावना भवति पूर्वरङ्गस्य अङ्गभूता अन्यस्य वा । तत्र पूर्वरङ्गाङ्गे अस्याः कविः उदासीनः । स्थापको एव स्वतन्त्रो निर्माता तु अन्यो वा कविः, ध्रुवागानादौ अपि..... सा द्वितीया.. वृत्तिभेदमध्ये पठिता । एवं प्ररोचनादौ अपि मन्तव्यम् । *GOS.* ed., Vol. I, pp. 249-250.
On *NS.* Ch. XX; III, p. 93.
एवं च यदा स्थापकोऽपि सूत्रधारतुल्यगुणाकारो रामादिवदेव प्रयुज्यते तदा इदं कविकृतं आमुखं भवति । *GOS.* ed. Vol. III, p. 93.

6. Cf. Kālidāsa's *Vikramorvaśīya*:
प्रणयिषु वा दाक्षिण्याद् अथवा सद्वस्तुपुरुषबहुमानात् ।
शृणुत मनोभिरवहितैः क्रियामिमां कालिदासस्य ।।

7. *ND.*'s statement,
प्ररोचना तु पूर्वरङ्गाङ्गभूतापि नाट्ये प्रवृत्ते प्रधानमिति
may be easily understood on this background. For 'evolution of the *pūrvaraṅga*', see my *Bhāratanāṭya-mañjarī* (BORI), Introduction, pp. lxxii ff.

8. Cf. Bāṇa's ref.: सूत्रधारकृतारम्भैः नाटकैः··· । See my *Bhāsa Studies*, no. IX, pp. 127-138.
ND. quotes from a play अनङ्गवती where the stage direction पूर्वरङ्गस्य अन्ते स्थापकः occurs.

9. Cf. सूत्रधार एव स्थापकः इति सूत्रधारः पूर्वरङ्गं प्रयुज्य स्थापकः सन् प्रविशेत् इति न भिन्नकर्तृकता । *NS GOS.* Vol. I, (2nd revised ed.), p. 248.

10. At Ch. V, Śl. 166, *NS.* has :
प्रस्तावनां ततः कुर्यात् काव्यप्रख्यापनाश्रयाम् ।
उद्घात्यकादि कर्तव्यं काव्योपक्षेपणश्रयम् ।।
At Ch. XX, Śl. 33, *NS.* has :
उद्घात्यकः कथोद्घातः प्रयोगातिशयस्तथा ।
प्रवृत्तकावलगिते पञ्चाङ्गान्यामुखस्य तु ।।

The second reference is a detailed explanation of आदि in the first statement.

11. Cf. *NS*. Ch. XX, Śl. 30-31 :
नटी विदूषको वापि पारिपार्श्विक एव वा ।
सूत्रधारेण सहिताः संलापं यत्तु कुर्वते ॥
चित्रैर्वाक्यैः स्वकार्योत्थैर्वीथ्यङ्गैरन्यथापि वा ।
आमुखं तत्तु विज्ञेयं बुधैः प्रस्तावनापि वा ॥

12. That is why, perhaps, *Bhāvaprakāśana* calls 'श्रीहर्षो निपुणः कविः' as *prarocanā*, and 'मदृवर्ग्या रसपाठगीतिषु' as *prastāvanā*, although the letter also contains an element of *prarocanā*. *GOS*. ed., *BP*. 8, pp. 228-29. See also, *Nātyadarpṇa*, Ch. III, Śl. 3-4, about *prarocanā*:
तत्र पूर्वरङ्गे गुणस्तुत्या प्रस्तुतप्रबन्धार्थस्य प्रीत्यादिहेतुत्वप्रशंसनेन सामाजिकानां श्रवणावलोकनोत्साहोत्पादनं, प्रकृतोऽर्थः प्रकर्षेण रोच्यते, उपादेयतया ध्रियते, अनया इति प्ररोचना । ···इयं प्ररोचना पूर्वरङ्गात् प्रथमं पश्चाच्च निबध्यते । निबन्धे चास्या नावश्यंभावनियम इति ।
GOS. edn., pp. 138-39.

13. Abhinava on *NS* Ch. XX, Śl. 31:
आमुखमिति मुखसन्धेः निवर्तते यतः, आङ् मर्यादायाम् । यदि वा अत्र आमुखं ईषन्मुखं वा प्रस्ताव्यते अनया (प्रस्तावनया)·· । तत्र कदाचित् कार्याभिमुखं नीयते पूर्वरङ्गविधिः तदभिमुखं वा कार्यारम्भः तन्नीयते·· । एवं च यदा स्थापकोऽपि सूत्रधारतुल्यगुणाकारो रामादिवदेव प्रयुज्यते तदा इदं कविकृतं आमुखं भवति । *GOS*., Vol. Vol. III, p. 93.

14. *ND*. Ch. III, Śl. 3-4:
इदं तावद् आमुखं नाट्यात् पृथक्भूतम् । तत्र कदाचित् रङ्गसूत्रयिता एव आमुखार्थमनुतिष्ठति, तथा च दृश्यते 'नान्द्यन्ते सूत्रधारः' । 'नान्द्यन्ते' इति अवयवे समुदायोपाचारात् 'पूर्वरङ्गान्ते इति द्रष्टव्यम् । ·· अत्र च पक्षे आमुखार्थस्य सूत्रधारविषयत्वात् मुखसन्धेः प्रभृति कवेर्व्यापारः । कदाचित्त् सनान्दीकं रङ्गमनुष्टाय विश्रान्ते सूत्रधारे तत्तुल्यगुणाकृतिः स्थापकः आमुखमनुतिष्ठति । यथा 'अनङ्गवल्यां' नाटिकायां दृश्यते 'पूर्वरङ्गस्य अन्ते स्थापकः' । अत्र च पक्षे आमुखानुष्ठानेऽपि कवेर्व्यापारः । स्थापकस्य सूत्रधारानुकारिणो नटस्य इव, कविना एव प्रवेशात् ।
GOS. edn., p. 136.

15. Cf. 'आङ् मर्यादायाम्' तेन मुखसन्धि प्राप्य निवर्तते । 'ईषदर्थे वा' ततः ईषन्मुखं मुखसन्धिसूचकत्वाद् आरम्भः । *ND. GOS.* edn. p. 136.
16. Cf. *Uttararāmacarita*, Nirṇayasāgara ed. 10th reprint, 1949; p. 7:
(On तदानींतनश्च संवृत्तः) यद्यपि भोजराजमतरीत्या सूत्रधारनटीप्रभृतिभिः प्रकृतदेशकालावलम्बिनीं प्रस्तावनाम् उक्त्वा सूत्रधारादीन् निष्कास्य भूमिकां प्रवेश्य प्रवर्तिष्यमाण-काव्याभिनय-सूचक विष्कम्भो वक्तव्यः, तथापि सूत्रधारस्य एव काव्यकथाघटक-देशकालसम्बन्धम् अङ्गीकृत्य विष्कम्भवर्ण्य-कथोपन्यासः सूत्रधारत्वअपरित्यागाच्च प्रस्तावनत्व-अहानिः इति कवेर्मतम्।। । तदनुसारेण 'अहमायोध्यकः संवृत्तोऽस्मि' इति ।
17. Abhinava on *NS.* Ch. XVIII, Śl 115-116:
यदा प्रष्टैव प्रतिवचनगतं वैचित्र्यमभिसन्धाय पृच्छति प्रतिवक्तृ-उचितं अभिधत्ते तदा तद् उत्तरं उद्घात्यकम् । प्रश्नात्मके उद्घाते साधु इति यत् ('तत्र साधुः' पा० 4.4.98), तत्र अज्ञातार्थे कः ('अज्ञाते' पा० 5.3.73) ।
18. *NS. GOS*, Ch. XVIII, Śl. 115-116.

पदानि त्वगतार्थानि ये नराः पुनरादरात् ।
योजयन्ति पदैरन्यैस्तदुद्घात्यकमुच्यते ।।

The reading पदानि तु गतार्थानि means, अर्थगतानि प्रश्नरूपाणि, Abhinava understands अगतार्थानि as of obscure meaning or reply.
19. See *RS.* Ch. III, Śl. 152 ff. Adyar Lib. Series No. 110.
20. For *SD.*'s definition see, Ch. VI, Śl. 34. The comment in *SD.* is:
अत्र अन्यार्थवन्त्यपि पदानि हृदयस्थ-अर्थगत्या अर्थान्तरे संक्रमय्य पात्र-प्रवेशः । The explanation in लक्ष्मी टीका is प्रवेष्टुः अभिप्रेतार्थे स्थापकस्य अभिप्रेतार्थं ऊह्यते अन्तर्लीयते इति उद्घात्यको नाम प्रस्तावनाभेदः । Kashi Skt. Series No. 145.

For *BP's* definition and example see *BP. GOS.* p. 230, ll. 7-8 ff. It is identical with *DR.* III. 13 ff.
21. *NS. GOS.* Ch. XVIII, Śl. 116-117:

यत्रान्यस्मिन् समावेश्य कार्यमन्यत् प्रसाध्यते ।
तच्चावलगितं नाम विज्ञेयं नाट्ययोक्तृभिः ।।

22. *DR.* Ch. III, Śl. 14b-15a ff. Adyar Lib. Series No. 97.

23. See *BP*. *GOS*, p. 230, II. 17-22, p. 231, II. 1-2. *BP's* reference to *Śākuntala* VI. 17 (कार्या सैकतलीनहंसमिथूना) in this context is quite puzzling.

24. *Lakṣmi* comm. on *SD*. Ch. VI, Śl. 38, for example, understands the juxtaposition of two matters as implying similarity. The *sūtradhāra*'s own statement is in a position of *prastuta* or *upameya*; suggestion about the character entering the stage is taken in the position of *upamāna;* and the beautiful way in which the suggestion is connected with the *prastuta* gives the name *avalagita*. Such *pātra-praveśa* by similarity occurs also in *pravṛttaka*; so the two are distinguished by assuming the existence of *śleṣa* in *pravṛttaka* and its absence in *avalagita*. Read :
यत्र प्रयोगे प्रस्तावनायां एकत्र एकस्मिन् विषये समावेशात् तत्प्रयोगस्य समर्निर्दिष्टत्वात् हेतोः अन्यद् उपमानभूत-पात्रप्रवेश सूचकरूपं कार्यं प्रसाध्यते सूत्रधारेण सूच्यते बुधैः तद् आमुखं 'अवलगति पात्रप्रवेशेन सह शोभनं अवसजति' इति। नाम्ना अवलगतिमिति कथितम् । ... श्लेषादिसत्त्वे प्रवर्तकम् तद् अभावे तु अवलगितम् इति ।
Rucirā comm. on *SD* explains similarly, understanding समावेशात् as सादृश्योद्भावनात् । Read : यस्य कस्यापि प्रस्तुतस्य कार्यस्य सादृश्यमुद्भाव्य यत्र पात्रप्रवेशरूपं कार्यं सम्पाद्यते तद् तत्र अवलगितत्वात् अवलगितं नाम प्रस्तावनाङ्गम् इति भावः ।
(Venkatesvera Press ed , Bombay, 1920, p. 437). *Avalagita* is sought to be distinguished from *prayogātiśaya* by assuming that in the latter *pātrapraveśa* follows an announcement behind the curtain (?).

25. Cf. अवलगितं पात्रसंसूचनार्थं यद् आलपनं तद् द्रष्टव्यम् । यथा तवास्मि गीतरागेण ..' *NLRK*, Dillon's ed., II. 1193-1195.

26. See, *ND* II, 101a and the prose gloss on it.

27. *NS*. *GOS*. Ch. XX, Śl. 35 :

    सूत्रधारस्य वाक्यं वा वाक्यार्थमेव वा ।
    गृहीत्वा प्रविशेत् पात्रं कथोद्घातः स कीर्तितः ॥

28. Abhinava on *NS*. Ch. XX, Śl. 35, *GOS*. ed., Vol. III. p. 94 :
कथा काव्यार्थरूपा, ऊर्ध्वमेव हन्यते गम्यते तत्र इति कथोद्घातः ।
Lakṣmi comm. on *SD*. VI 35 explains,
कथया सूत्रधारवाक्येन उद्घातः पात्रोपस्थितिः यत्र स कथोद्घातः...।

29. *NS*. Ch. XX, Śl. 36 :

प्रयोगे तु प्रयोगं तु सूत्रधारः प्रयोजयेत् ।
ततश्च प्रविशेत् पात्रं प्रयोगातिशयो हि सः ॥

Abhinava explains,

प्रयोगे इति प्रस्तावनात्मके प्रयोगम् इति नाट्यात्मकं भावितम् । सूत्रधार एष यत्र प्रयोगे समुद्रकवाटयुगलवद् योजयति स प्रयोगद्वयश्लेषणात् प्रयोगातिशयः ।

30. *NS. GOS*. Ch. XX, Śl. 37 :

कालप्रवृत्तिमाश्रित्य वर्णना या प्रयुज्यते ।
तदाश्रयाच्च पात्रस्य प्रवेशः तत् प्रवृत्तकम् ॥

31. *DR*. III, 2-3 :

पूर्वरङ्गं विधायादौ सूत्रधारे विनिर्गते ।
प्रविश्य तद्वदपरः काव्यमास्थापयेन्नटः ॥
दिव्यमर्त्ये स तद्रूपो मिश्रमन्यतरस्तयोः ।
सूचयेद् वस्तु बीजं वा मुखं पात्रमथापि वा ॥

32. *RS*. III, 135 ff. :

तदेतन्नाटकारम्भप्रकारो वक्ष्यते मया ॥
विधेर्यथैव सङ्कल्पो मुखतां प्रतिपद्यते ।
प्रधानस्य प्रबन्धस्य तथा प्रस्तावना स्मृता ॥
अर्थस्य प्रतिपाद्यस्य तीर्थं प्रस्तावनोच्यते ।
प्रस्तावनायास्तु मुखे नान्दी कार्या शुभावहा ॥...
नान्द्यन्ते तु प्रविष्टेन सूत्रधारेण धीमता ।
प्रसाधनाय रङ्गस्य वृत्तिर्योज्या हि भारती ॥
अङ्गान्यस्याश्च चत्वारि भरतेनावभाषिरे ।
प्ररोचनामुखे चैव वीथीप्रहसने तथा ॥

33. *ND*. III, 106a, gloss :

एषां च नाट्यपात्रप्रवेशप्रकाराणाम् अन्यतम एव एकः चमत्कारी निबन्धनीयः । अन्यथा पात्रप्रवेशग्रन्थाबाहुल्येन प्रस्तुतार्थविघातः स्याद् इति ।

24

CONCEPT OF *SANDHI* IN DRAMATIC PLOT-CONSTRUCTION

Bharata speaks (*Nāṭyaśāstra*, (NS) ch. 19) of five stages or *avasthās* of dramatic plot-construction and development, which he insists, should come in the precise order in which they are enumerated, namely, *prārambha*, *prayatna*, *prāptisambhava* or *prāptyāśā*, *niyatā phalaprāpti* or *niyatāpti*, and *phalayoga*. This is natural and perfectly reasonable because the dramatic plot (*vastu*) is conceived as an accomplishment of a definite goal on the part of the hero (*netā*); like any other human activity, the dramatic hero's activity or that of his helpmates and assistants must go naturally through the stages of beginning; effort and finding of suitable means to achieve the desired goal; a balance of gains and setbacks; a positive indication of favourable turn due to renewed effort and employment of fresh means; and finally the gain of the desired fruit. The human effort goes through these stages in this order; and the same must be expected in the development of a dramatic plot.

Bharata mentions five instruments of plot-construction called *arthaprakṛti* which a playwright can use. They are *bīja* or seed, meaning indication of the central theme or the objective of the hero; *bindu* or drop which is a continuous return to the central objective as the plot becomes involved and complicated; *patākā* and *prakarī* which are episodic events and small incidents which a dramatist would use to develop and diversify his story, and which would help indirectly or directly the hero's efforts to win his desired fruit; and finally *kārya* where the scattered threads of

dramatic construction would be collected together to show the culmination in accomplishment.

It is also to be expected that, in spite of complex and diversified construction used for charm and entertainment, the dramatic plot must present an organic unity, an integrated whole, where all the several elements of plot-construction are harmonised. Bharata, therefore, speaks of five *sandhis* and sixty-four *sandhi-aṅgas*. *Sandhi* means a joint or juncture; and their *aṅgas* denote the parts which complete the process of joining the several stages (*avasthās*) and instruments (*arthaprakṛtis*) of plot-construction. The five *sandhis* are *mukha*, *pratimukha*, *garbha*, *vimarśa* or *avamarśa* and *nirvahaṇa*.[1]

Bharata has spoken of precise order of employment only in connection with *avasthās* and *not* in connection with the *arthaprakṛtis*.

It appears that Bharata's text and particularly of Abhinavagupta may not have been easily available to later writers on Sanskrit dramatic theory. It is also likely that some later writers wished to re-formulate Bharata's dramatic theory or improve upon it. And in this attempt at deviating from Bharata, Dhanañjaya, the author of *Daśarūpaka* (DR), seems to have taken the lead.

* * *

Bharata does not give a separate definition of *sandhi*. But his concept emerges clearly from his definition of each *sandhi* and from the purpose *sandhi-aṅgas* which he describes.[2] Abhinava explains in his commentary what *sandhi* signifies. Abhinava states that the etymological explanation of the terms *sandhi* is 'joining of different parts of the plot matter with each other, and of each part with its own sub-parts'.[3] DR attempts a separate definition and says that, 'While the parts (of dramatic plot) are all connected together (with a single purpose, namely, the objective or the fruit of the story), interm:diate connection with a single purpose is to be called *sandhi*'.[4] The definition is rather vague; but interpreted in the light of what Dhanañjaya says in the first half

of this *kārikā* he appears to consider the five *arthaprakṛtis* (*bīja*, *bindu* etc) and the five *avasthās* (*prārambha*, *prayatna* etc.) as the components of dramatic story. They are all connected with a single purpose, which the main fruit (*phala*) the hero desires to obtain. This is *eka-anvaya*, connection with the central or principal objective of the dramatic story; this is the sole or main purpose (*mukhya artha*, *prayojana*). Each of the *arthaprakṛtis* and *avasthās* has to accomplish its own purpose or result and thereby help in the accomplishment of the main fruit; for this it is necessary that they themselves are inter-connectəd; this mutual connection is *sandhi*. According to DR when, therefore, an *arthaprakṛti* is 'joined' to an *avasthā* the joining results technically in a *sandhi*. This leads DR to formulate the *yathāsaṁkhya* doctrine.

The idea is of an orderly respective connection between sets of things enumerated in a definite order and sequence. Bharata mentioned five stages of plot development, five *arthaprakṛtis* and five *sandhis*. Dhanañjaya develops an idea of *yathāsṁkhya* or respective mutual connection between *arthaprakṛtis* and *avasthās* and calls their *samanvaya* or proper mutual connection the *sandhi*. Graphically presented the idea is as follows :

bīja	+	*prārambha*	=	*mukha sandhi*
bindu	+	*prayatna*	=	*pratimukha-sandhi*
patākā	+	*prāptisambhava*	=	*garbha-sandhi*
prakarī	+	*niyatāpti*	=	*vimarṣa* (*avamarśa*)-*sandhi*
kārya	+	*phalayoga*	=	*nirvahaṇa-sandhi*

The question is whether the *yathāsaṁkhya* formation is theoretically correct and workable in practice; and although a departure, whether it is a welcome improvement on the concept of Bharata. Examined critically it will be found to be not so.

(1) The formulation of DR is against the authority of *Nāṭyaśāstra*. Bharata does *not* speak of *yathāsaṁkhya* order in the context of *arthaprakṛtis* and *sandhis*. He mentions a definite and precise order only in connection with the five

avasthās, so that the stages of plot development occur in the precise order of enumeration; this order is unalterable.[5] Bharata insistence on the *krama* here is backed by actual experience of life and is true of any human activity undertaken for achieving a definite goal. It is not true about the *arthaprakṛti-s* because these 'instruments' of dramatic plot development are not all of equal importance. A dramatist will have to determine which instrument is useful and which is not for his particular plot-construction and use it accordingly.[6] With a distinct possibility, therefore, of some *arthaprakṛti* (like *patākā* or *prakarī*) not being used in a dramatic plot, how does *yathāsaṁkhya* order become relevant ? DR has ignored this theoretical aspect of plot construction. The commentator Dhanika's insistence, *yathāsaṁkhya eva,* must be due to a commentator's loyalty to his text-author or is an unthinking justification; either way it is unwarranted.

(2) What is reasonable to expect is that the first *arthaprakṛti 'bīja'* will coincide with the first *avasthā* of a dramatic plot, because the 'seed' must be sown in the 'beginning'. Similarly the fifth *arthaprakṛti 'kārya'*, which is dramatic action in totality culminating in the fruit, must naturally coincide with the final stage of *phalayoga.* But such *yathāsaṁkhya* connection cannot be applicable to the remaining *arthaprakṛtis. Bindu,* as Bharata defines it, maintains continuity of the central theme, the main plot, in the midst of the complex developments and diversions of the story development. *Bindu* is a continuous reminder of the central purpose of the story as and when the plot thickens and becomes diversified by a mixture of events and incidents. As such, *bindu* will start appearing after the seed has been sown and will continue to appear in *all avasthās* as dictated by the demands of the story. How can *bindu* then be connected with the second *avasthā* only as the *yathāsaṁkhya* idea wants? The same is the case with *patākā* and *prakarī.* which cannot be necessarily connected with the third and fourth *avasthās* imagined in the *yathāsaṁkhya* formulation. A dramatist will use *patākā* or an episode or bye-plot and *prakarī* or an incident anywhere he likes, as it suits his plot-construction. For example, Kālidāsa uses the *prakarīs* of

the bee harassing Śakuntalā and of the frightened elephant running amuck in the first act of *Śākuntala* and in the first *avasthā* of the story; and the *patākā* of the Vidūṣaka's role in the story is started at the beginning of the second act, as the first *avasthā* is about to be completed and the second is to start. DR's formulation is a failure to recognise this requirement of the art of drama construction and is an unwarranted encroachment on an artist's freedom to use the 'instruments' of plot-construction as they suit his purpose. It is presumable that Bharata was aware of the demands of art and did not mention *yathāsaṁkhya* order in connection with the *arthaprakṛtis*.

(3) The failure of the *yathāsaṁkhya* idea becomes obvious in the explanation of the third *garbha-sandhi*. Probably in view of several dramas that must have been before him, Dhanañjaya was compelled to state that in the third *avasthā* or *prāptisaṁbhava*, *patākā* may or may not be present; and his loyal commentator Dhanika had to state that though *patākā* was essential at this stage according to the *yathāsaṁkhaya* rule, the rule did not apply here.[7]

Among the later theorists who follow Dhanañjaya's *yathasṁkhya* idea must be mentioned Śāradātanaya who says in his *Bhāvaprakāśana* (BP) that the option about the use of *patākā* in the *garbha-sandhi* was suggested by Kohala. BP's opinion seems to be that, in the third stage of *prāptyāśa* or *prāptisṁbhava* employment of *patākā* is desirable; but if it were not used *bindu* or *bīja* may be used. BP cites *Mālavikāgnimitra* as an example of the absence of *patākā* and *Mālatimādhava* as of its presence.[8] BP's statement about Kohala is not possible to be verified. But the use of *bīja* in the third stage and *garbha-sandhi* is questionable, though *bindu* may, of course, be used. I am doubtful about the illustration of *Mālavikāgnimitra* too. The *garbha-sandhi* occurs here in act III. Bakulāvalikā feels honoured by the mission of love entrusted to her; she knows that it is not easy to speak to Mālavikā in confidence as she is more closely guarded by queen Dhāriṇī; but she promises to do her best. In this statement are to be found both *prāpti* and *aprāpti* and also *anveṣaṇa*, the three features of the third *avasthā*

prāptisaṁbhava. The commentator Kāṭayavema observes that this stage of *prāptyāśā* combines with *bindu* (in the form of the main theme of the play, the fulfilment of Agnimitra's love for Mālavikā) to produce the *garbha-sandhi.*[9] The *yathāsaṁkhya* idea which Kāṭayavema uses here following DR is questionable. But as a matter of fact, the *Aśoka-dohada* episode may be accepted as a *patākā.* It has its own purpose, namely, blossoming into flowers; and when it is fulfilled in act V it achieves the purpose of the main theme too by fulfilling the love of Agnimitra and Mālavikā. The essential point, however, is that with the possible absence of *patākā* in the third *avasthā* the *yathāsaṁkhya* idea breaks down. If Dhanañjaya were prepared to recognise this possibility it implies also that he is not logical and consistent in the formulation of the *yathāsaṁkhya* idea.

This is also true about *prakarī,* though many later theorists do not bring in *prakarī* in their discussion of the fourth *vimarśa-sandhi.* The commentators of Sanskrit drama do, however, perform acrobatics to work out the *yathāsaṁkhya* idea. Kāṭayavema, for example, suggests that Agnimitra's musings in act IV. 1, which is really a review of the *bīja,* should be looked upon as *prakarī* (!)[10] because the fourth *avasthā* is to be combined with the fourth *artha-prakṛti* as per DR's doctrine. The review of the development from root to the prospect of fruit in IV. 1 is either a *vimarśa,* a process of thinking, or *bindu,* a reminder of the central theme. IV. 2 refers metaphorically to a cuckoo and female bee, perched on a mango tree in blossom, being driven to their nests by untimely rain and forceful wind. This is suggestive of the imprisonment of Mālavikā and Bakulāvalikā. But this is not an actual incident; there is no rain or storm; it is purely a poetic analogy. So, like the first verse the second too cannot be looked upon as a *prakarī,* unless the idea of *Bhāvaprakāśana* and *Rasārṇava-sudhākara* that verses descriptive of nature may be treated as *prakarī* is somehow stretched and applied here. Actually this is a failure of the *yathāsaṁkhya* idea, which no commentorial ingenuity or bluffing can possibly conceal.

(4) In the discussion of *sandhis* Bharata states some rules

about their use in different types of dramatic composition. Bharata says,[11]

Dima, Samavakāra	have 4 *sandhis*, *avamarśa* is omitted;
Vyāyoga, Ihāmṛga	have 3 *sandhis*, *garbha* and *vimarśa* are omitted;
Prahasana, Vithi, Aṅika and *Bhāṇa*	have 2 *sandhis*, *pratimukha*, *garbha* and *avamarśa* are omitted.

In explaining these statements Abhinava says that the heroes in *ḍima* and such heroic types are generally represented as bold and courageous. There is no fear of their downfall or of any setback in their effort. And so *vimarśa* which is occasioned by the rise of new obstacles is not necessary. The heroes of the *vyāyoga* type are, comparatively speaking personally 'instrumental' in achieving the expected fruit; it is a direct achievement; and so *garbha* and *vimarśa sandhis* have no scope in such a plot. Yet in spite of this, a dramatist may use a *patākā* or *prakarī* in his dramatic structure; Bhāsa, for example, uses the Brahmin episode in his one-act *Madhyamavyāyoga*. In *ihāmṛga* type heavenly women are involved. This is also a heroic type. Here the obstacles are set aside with fight. But woman are capable of enduring hardship; and so the story need not go through the *avasthās* of hope and despair alternating frequently. The dramatic action, with appropriate remedies used, can march straight towards achievement. In *prahasanas* the so-called 'heroes' are supposed to act against the approved precepts of religion; the story is not new; the details are familiar from social life: and so the beginning and the end alone matter in such stories; consequently the intervening three *sandhis* do not figure in such compositions. Even in a major type lik *nāṭaka*, if the hero is shown as relying on his own strength and valour, external help becomes unnecessary; and plays with such heroes can dispense with *patākā* or *prakarī* if the dramatic action does not need such *arthaprakṛtis*.

It becomes quite evident from Bharata's theory that the *sandhis* are connected with *avasthās*, and not with the *arthaprakṛtis*. If a particular stage of plot development were not necessary for a particular type of play, the corresponding

sandhi too becomes unnecessary and is omitted. If on the other hand, full-fledged play were built all the five *avasthās* and *sandhis* become a necessary part of it.[12] Accordingly, Abhinava states emphatically that *sandhis* are connected with *avasthās*. He defines *sandhi* as the joining of the *aṅgas* or the subparts of each *sandhi* in order to build a dramatic plot into an organic unified whole.[13]

(5) Abhinava himself raises three important questions in regard to the *arthaprakṛtis*, the 'instruments' of plot development[14] : (a) Can all the *arthaprakṛtis*, like the *avasthās* be used in all types of dramatic plots. (b) Is the connection of *arthaprakṛtis*, *sandhis* and *avasthās* a connection of 'respective order' (the first with the first of each group etc., *yathāsaṁkhyam niyamaḥ*)? (c) And does the order in which the *arthaprakṛtis* are enumerated indicate their importance as efficient 'instruments' of plot construction? Abhinava suggests that that the statements of Bharata in regard to these and direction he gives for recognising what is 'principal' and what is 'subsidiary' in plot construction[15] provide an effective answer to the three queries or 'doubts' (*śankā-traya*) mentioned here.

The NS does not look upon all the *arthaprakṛtis* as inevitable and essential in all types of drama. In relation to the type of hero and his desired achievement whatever *arthaprakṛti* is calculated to be useful for the accomplishment more richly that alone is important (*pradhāna*); the rest, though employed in a play, will be subservient (*guṇabhūta*) and as good as non existent (*asat-kalpa*). For example, *patākā* and *prakari* may not be needed for heroes who are endowed with valour and great pride; *bija*, *bindu* and *kārya* will, of course, be found to be useful in almost all dramatic plots. The position of the *arthaprakṛtis* is not, therefore, on par with that of the *avasthās*. Besides a dramatist will have to decide for himself what *arthaprakṛti* is important for his chosen plot and what are subsidiary. This answers the first question. The answer is that all the five *arthaprakṛtis* are not of equal importance, and are not necessary for every dramatic plot.

The conclusion answers the second question too. It

shows that there cannot be a *yathāsaṁkhya niyama* for the connection of *arthaprakṛtis* with *avasthās* and the resulting *sandhis*. A dramatist, as already noted, must use prominently and profusely that *arthaprakṛti* from out of the five which is most appropriate and immediately helpful for his dramatic objective, and relegate the other 'instruments' to a subsidiary position. This rules out any *yathāsaṁkhya* connection between *avasthās* and *arthaprakṛtis*.[16]

And so an answer to third question also follows. The fact that there is a *guṇa-pradhāna-bhāva* among the *artha-prakṛtis* negates the assumption that their enumeration in a particular order in the theory is suggestive of their order and relative importance as efficient instruments of dramatic plot-construction. Not only will a dramatist's design determine which *arthaprakṛti* is more important but the angle of presentation also will affect the relative importance of an instrument. Thus, in a play like *Tāpasa-vatsarāja* on the Udayana legend, if restoring Vāsavadattā to Udayana is regarded as the main fruit then the *arthaprakṛti* '*bindu*', Udayana's continuous allusion to the memory of and his love for Vāsavadattā, will be *pradhāna*. If on the order hand, regaining the lost Kauṣāmbī kingdom is the fruit mainly aimed at then the minister's efforts in this direction, which will take the form of '*patākā*' and '*prakarī*' in the dramatic construction, will have to be treated as *pradhāna*. The critical interpretation of the play does show this variance. Some critics regard *bindu* as *pradhāna* throughout this play; because they look upon Udayana, Abhinava points out, as a passive hero dependent on his ministers for the achievement of his objective. But it will be logical, according to the theory, to treat the minister as a *patākā-nāyaka* and maintain Udayana's position as the principal hero. Any way, the point is that the importance of any *arthaprakṛti* will depend upon the npture of the dramatic plot, the dramatist's design for its construction and his angle of presentation. The *artha-prakṛtis* are only 'instruments' of plot-construction; the dramatic action as a whole and its intended objective or fruit are the main concern. How can then one connect a

particular *arthaprakṛti* to form a *sandhi* and suggest or assume an ordered, fixed, respective connection between the units of the two sets?

* * *

The inevitable conclusion is that Dhanañjaya's concept of *sandhi* and his formulation of *yathāsaṁkhya* rule are wrong. DR's view has neither the sanction of Bharata's theory nor the support of dramatic practice. The Sanskrit śāstra-writers, particularly those who write on poetics, seem to have a flair for symmetrical and patterned presentation of ideas, and a passion for permutations and combinations in achieving divisions and sub-divisions of a concept or a rhetorical principle. In doing so they do not pause, sometimes, to consider that they are ruining or mutilating a theory, or achieving an elaboration which has no real value. Dhanañjaya has evidently fallen a prey to this trend. With three sets of five things available, namely, *avasthā*, *arthāprakṛti* and *sandhi*, he proceeded to establish *yathāsaṁkhya* connection among the components of each of them. He ignored the theory of Bharata, disregarded or was not aware of the masterly explanation of Abhinava, and tried to gloss over the fact that the written works of dramatists did not support his idea of *yathāsaṁkhya* rule. The result has been a twisting of an originally sound theory and a disaster for dramatics.

What is more suprising is the unthinking and blind following of Dhanañjaya's incorrect concept of *sandhi* and his *yathāsaṁkhya* idea by the authors of *Bhāvaprakāśana*, *Rasārṇavasudhākara* and *Sāhityadarpaṇa*, and by the commentators of Sanskrit dramas.

Among the later theorists Sāgaranandin and Rāmacandra-Guṇacandra understand Bharata's theory correctly and present it accurately. *Nāṭakalakṣana-ratnakośa* explains *sandhi* as 'fitting the different parts of a dramatic story into a mutually harmonious connection.' *Sandhis* are so called because 'with their help the different matters in a dramatic plot are mutually joined together'. Although this is

somewhat vague, Sāgaranandin's definitions of the *sandhis* and their *aṅgas* are consistent with those in the NS.[17] *Nāṭyadarpaṇa* is faithful to Bharata's formulation and follows Abhinava carefully. *Sandhis* are described here as 'parts of the principal dramatic story which follow the five stages of plot development (*avasthās*) in due order', showing thereby that *yathāsaṁkhya* connection exists only between the *avasthās* and *sandhis*. The *sandhis* also join their own sub-parts. Since the *sandhis* come in the wake of the *avasthās*, with the completion of a particular *avasthā* the particular *sandhi* which covers it is also completed. In the major and full-fledged dramatic types the five *avasthās* are necessarily present; and so the five *sandhis* are also present in them.[18] Abhinava has made it quite clear that a particular *sandhi* is covered (*vyāpta*) by a particular *avasthā*; and and so the five *sandhis* must necessarily follow the five *avasthās*.[19] The position of the *arthaprakṛtis* is different and they must not be brought in, except for reference, in the consideration of *sandhis*.

References

1. The article is based on my book *Nāṭya-Mañjarī-Saurabha* or *Sanskrit Dramatic Theory*. For details and full explanation see introduction.
2. See NS. XIX. 37-47.
3. Abhinava, NS. GOS. Vol. III, p. 23 : तेन अर्थावयवाः सन्धीयमानाः परस्परम् अङ्गैश्च सन्धयः, इति समाख्या निरुक्ता ।
4. DR. I. 23b: अन्तरैकार्थसम्बन्धः सन्धिरेकान्वये सति ।। Dhanika's gloss reads : एकेन प्रयोजनेन अन्वितानां कथांशानाम् अवान्तरैक-प्रयोजनसम्बन्धः सन्धिः ।
5. Cf. NS. XIX. 7 : संसाध्ये फलयोगे तु व्यापारः कारणस्य यः ।
   तस्यानुपूर्व्या विज्ञेयाः पञ्चावस्थाः प्रयोक्तृभिः ।।

   Abhinava explains, 'आनुपूर्व्या' इति उद्देशक्रमेणैव प्रयोक्तृभिः कविभिः निबन्धनीयतया ज्ञातव्याः··· । चकारैः तथाशब्देन च (in the next verse) अवश्यंभाविक्रमत्वम् आसां (अवस्थानां) उच्यते । NS.

GOS. Vol. III, p. 6.
Also, XIX. 14 : सर्वस्यैव हि कार्यस्य प्रारब्धस्य फलार्थिभिः ।
एतास्त्वनुक्रमेणैव पञ्चावस्था भवन्ति हि ॥

6. Cf. NS. XIX. 21, 27 : एतेषां यस्य येनार्थो यतश्च गुण इष्यते ।
तत् प्रधानं तु कर्तव्यं गुणभूतान्यतःपरम् ॥
Abhinava's comm. is quite significant : न सर्वत्र प्रारम्भादि-(अवस्था)-वत् सर्वा अर्थप्रकृतयोऽपि। अपि तु यस्य नायकस्य येन अर्थप्रकृतिविशेषण प्रयोजनसम्पत्तिः अधिका तदेव प्रधानम्, अन्यत्तु भवदपि गुणभूतम् असत्कल्पम्। यथा स्वपराक्रमबहुमानशालिनां पताकाप्रकर्यं अविवक्षिते एव। *Nāṭyadarpaṇa* endorses these ideas.

7. Cf. DR. 136 : गर्भस्तु दृष्टनष्टस्य बीजस्यान्वेषणं मुहुः ।
द्वादशाङ्गः, पताका स्यान्नवा स्यात्, प्राप्तिसंभवः ॥
Dhanika writes, तत्र च औत्सर्गिकत्वेन प्राप्तायाः पताकाया अनियमं दर्शयति 'पताका स्यान्न वा' इत्यनेन ।

8. *Bhavaprakāśana*, GOS. ed., p. 210 :
स्यादत्र (गर्भसन्धौ) उत्सर्गतः प्राप्तिः पताकाया विकल्पतः ।
तथाप्यस्या निवेशः स्यात् प्राप्ताशाया नियोगतः ॥
प्राप्ताशायामवस्थायां गर्भसन्धाविहाथवा ।
अपताके निवेशः स्याद बिन्दोर्बीजस्य वा क्वचित् ॥
समन्वयेऽर्थप्रकृतेः प्राप्ताशाया इतीरितः ।
अभावस्तु पताकाया यथा मालविकादिषु ।
सद्भावो दृश्यते तस्या मालतीमाधवादिषु ।
तस्मात् पताका स्यान्नेति विकल्पं प्राह कोहलः

9. Kāṭayavema observes on Bakulāvalikā's statement (*Mālavikā*. III), अत्र प्राप्तिसंभावनया प्राप्तयाशा नाम तृतीयावस्था सूचिता। This is correct. But he says further, अनया प्राप्तयाशया बिन्दोः समन्वयात् गर्भसन्धिः इति मन्तव्यम्। How so ? If Kāṭayavema is following the यथासंख्य rule of DR, the third *arthaprakṛti patākā* is expected here. As a matter of fact the *Aśoka-dohada* episode may be looked upon as a *patākā*.

10. Kāṭayavema says, अत्र प्रसाञ्जितं बीजं प्रकरीस्थाने मन्तव्यम् (!) ।
For the second concept of *prakarī*, see BP, which says, तथाऽत्र वर्णनादिस्तु प्रबन्धे प्रकरेर्भवेत् । GOS. ed. p. 202 : And RS has, शोभायै वेदिकादीनां यथा पुष्पाक्षतादयः । तथर्तुवर्णनादिस्तु प्रसङ्गे प्रकरी भवेत् । III. 17.

11. NS. XIX. 17-19; 45-57. See Abhinava also, NS. GOS. Vol. III, pp. 10-11.

12. See NS. XIX. 17 : पूर्णसन्धि च कर्तव्यं हीनसन्ध्यपि वा पुनः ।
नियमात् पूर्णसन्धि स्यात् हीनसन्ध्यथ कारणात् ॥

13. Abhinava's definition of *sandhi* is quoted above, in note (3). The other statements are : अवस्थापञ्चकानुयायिना सन्धिपञ्चकेनापि भाव्यमेव । on NS. XIX. 17; प्रारम्भोपयोगी यावान् अर्थराशिः ... तावान् मुखसन्धिः । on XIX. 39; विमर्शसन्धिः नियतफलप्राप्ति-अवस्थया व्याप्तः । on XIX. 42; मुखाद्यानां चतुर्णां सन्धीनां येऽर्थाः प्रारम्भाद्याः तेषां सहबीजिभिः बीजविकारैः क्रमेण अवस्थाचतुष्टयेन भवद्भिः उत्पत्ति-उद्घाटन-उद्भेद-गर्भनिर्भेद-लक्षणैः वर्तमानानां ... तन्निर्वहणं फलयोगावस्थया व्याप्तम् । on XIX. 43; अर्थभागराशिः सन्धिः इति उक्तम्...। on XIX. 50.

14. Abhinava's comm. on NS. XIX. 27, GOS. ed., vol. III, p. 16 ff.

15. See NS. XIX. 19-27; XIX. 27; see note (6).

16. To quote Abhinava (NS. GOS. Vol. III, p. 16) : तथा सन्धि-अवस्था-अर्थप्रकृतीनां यस्य येन उचितः सम्बन्धः, प्रधानं नाटकादिकार्यम्, इति द्वितीया (यथासंख्य-नियम-शङ्का) अपि निरस्ता । यतश्च गुणः उपकारः झटिति वाच्यते तदेव अर्थप्रकृतिरूपं पञ्चानां अन्यतमं प्रधानत्वेन बाहुल्येन निबन्धनीयम् अन्यद् गुणभावेन ।

17. Cf. सन्धिः परस्परं कथांशानां सङ्घटनम् । यथोक्तम्-सन्धीयन्ते अर्थाः परस्परं एभिः इति सन्धयः । NLRK, 57-64.

18. See ND.,I-37 and the gloss : सन्धयो मुख्यवृत्तांशाः पञ्चावस्थानुगाः क्रमात् । मुख्यस्य स्वतन्त्रस्य महावाक्यार्थस्य अंशा भागाः परस्परं स्वरूपेण च अङ्गैः सन्धीयन्ते इति सन्धयः । अवस्था भिः प्रारम्भादिभिः

अनुगता, अवस्थासमाप्तौ समाप्यन्ते इत्यर्थः। अवस्थानां च ध्रुवभावित्वात् सन्धयोऽपि नाटक-प्रकरण-नाटिका-प्रकरणीषु पञ्च अवश्यंभाविनः।

It appears that Bhoja held an identical view Cf. *Śṛngāraprakāśa*, 29 (Josyer's ed. vol. IV., pp. 978-979) : ते च सन्धयः अवस्थासंस्थासमवस्था इति।

19. See note (13) above. अवस्थापञ्चकानुयायिना सन्धिपञ्चकेन अपि भाव्यमेव। Abhinava on NS, XIX. 17.

25

DRAMATIC COMPETITION IN ANCIENT INDIA

[1]

Drama and dramatic art were in a developed state in ancient India. The royal patronage which the art received had given it a sophisticated polish and lustre. Plays were produced frequently on the occasion of festivals and religious holidays[1], and for the entertainment of the royal household and residential guests at a special command from the king.[2] Playwrights and actors could easily seek an opportunity to lure a fortune or lay claim to fresh laurels.

But display of dramatic art and winning of laurels were not the only objectives that prompted dramatic productions. There were also a motive of rivalry and a spirit of mutual competition. The *Nāṭyaśāstra* of Bharata provides theoretical information on such dramatic competitions.[3]

Bharata knows that the professional 'clash' of actors is caused by four factors :[4] (a) Sometimes the patrons themselves organised competitions among the professional actors and the rival groups were required to present their productions before a body of judges. (b) Mutual rivalry among the actors also was never absent ; and on such occasions the calibre of an individual's histrionic talent came to be decided by organised productions presented before a competent authority. (c) Practical considerations like earning a reward also motivated dramatic competitions. It could be imagined that art-minded patrons would reward handsomely the best performance in a competition and show proper appreciation of an actor's merits, as (d) a king would hold dramatic competitions

and honour a victorious group. Bharata particularly mentions the award of royal recognition, which was given in the form of a *Patākā* or Banner, and which marked the success of a representation or the excellence of an artist.

The four factors inspiring dramatic competitions appear to be connected with human psychology. It would not be surprising, therefore, if the motives were still operative. A lover of art could, even today, organise a dramatic competition and the relative merit of individual actors thus be decided by their performances in competitive dramatic productions presented on such an occasion. Like the kings in ancient India, the present State Governments do hold dramatic competitions and the best group of artists wins a cash award together with a 'Certificate' which resembles the ancient *Patākā* and which may be deemed as a symbol of Government recognition of merit. What the State Governments are doing today may be regarded as a legacy of Bharata.

[2]

In a dramatic competition properly organised it is necessary to lay down rules for judging the merits and demerits of a performance, to select a panel of judges, to evaluate the response of the audience and to frame a criterion for final decision. Bharata, I think, provides adequate answers to all such issues.

The success of a dramatic production, Bharata says,[5] is twofold : divine and human. The 'human success' is based on human effort, on the ability of the actors and on the proper response that the spectators would give to them. If in a dramatic representation the literary aspect of the composition were first-rate, and the actors' rendering of various moods and emotions, their facial expressions and movements, their acting, intonation, dress and make-up, all evoked admirable response from the audience, the success of such a production was well-nigh assured. The spectators during such a performance would smile with pleasure, give a hearty laugh, nod their heads in approbation, accord a thunderous applause by clapping their hands and exclaim in open

admiration by standing up in their seats in the auditorium. In relation to rival performances such a response would prove to be exceedingly favourable to the performing troupe. Obviously a performance in which the representation of rhetorical sentiments and emotions attains the highest level of art, the entire auditorium packed with spectators has a pindrop silence, there is rapt attention which is not disturbed by any kind of distraction, noise or accidents, is an ideal performance and its success may be regarded as divine'.[6]

Such a success of production is apt to be rare indeed. Considering the human liability to err it should be admitted that a relative judgement based on merits and demerits would alone decide the winner in a competition. Most of the defects that creep in a production are a result of impediments, natural to a man or deliberately brought in by malice. Bharata calls these impediments or defects as *Ghāta*,[7] which means a stroke that kills the success of a production. The *ghātas* or blemishes are of four kinds : engendered by Fate ; occasioned by one's own defective performance ; or by the malicious action of the rivals ; and such as result from an unforeseen accident. Storm, fire, rain, crash of lightning, unexpected appearance, of a serpent or a wild animal in the auditorium : these are impediments which an adverse destiny may bring in. Stormy winds, earthquake and lightning-crash are, again, accidental factors beyond the control of human power. If such blemishes marred a performance or made it impossible it could never be helped. But that is exactly the reason why the other two kinds of blemishes acquire a particular significance, Among the *ghātas* which are self-made Bharata lists the following : An actor forgetting his lines ; reciting speeches which are not in the script (obviously, of his own improvising), or such as really belong to the other character playing opposite him ; losing nerve on the stage ; artificial acting or exaggerated display of emotional states ; wrong or improper movements ; slipping of ornaments or head-dress ; and the selection of an actor completely unsuitable to the dramatic role.[8] These blemishes are due to the actor and the director ; and neither can escape their individual responsibility on this score.

But blemishes may be deliberately introduced in a performance by the malicious activity on the part of the rival groups. Jealousy, malice, partiality to one particular troupe and actual bribe may prompt an activity thwarting the success of a dramatic production. It is plain that such impediments would be created by rival actors and groups and their partisans.[9] These obstructionists would give a loud laugh during a rival performance for no reason whatsoever ; would cry, kick up noise, clap at wrong places ; or even go to the length of throwing cow-dung, lumps of clay at the actors, or introduce ants on the stage ; thus doing their worst to kill the performance of a competitive group.[10] The enumeration of the *ghātas* by Bharata, his anylysis and exposition clearly indicate that the human mind and the mob reaction have neither changed nor improved in the passage of fifteen hundred years ! The human animal still behaves in the same manner and takes perverse pleasure in demolishing a meeting or a performance. It is significant that Bharata terms these blemishes as 'rival-made' : the implication being that a judge would evaluate them properly and would not allow his mind to be influenced in judging the success of a performance.

[3]

The final success of a dramatic representation demands a balanced consideration of merits and demerits. That is probably the reason why Bharata wants to provide the assistance to the judges of a writer or reckoner, called *Gamaka* or *Gaṇaka*.[11] It appears that a writer's duty is to record in writing the points of 'successes' and 'blemishes' during the actual performance ; and the reckoner is to prepare a kind of balance-sheet totalling the successes and blemishes.[12] This record is bound to be valuable to the judges in arriving at their conclusions.

The judges, called *Prāśnika*, and their assistants are expected to be seated neither too near nor too far away from the actual stage. Bharata gives this distance to be twelve *hastas*.[13]

The panel of judges in a competition should consist, according to Bharata, of an expert on sacrifice, an actor, an expert on prosody, an expert on language and grammar, an expert on weapons, a painter, a courtesan, a musician, and a royal officer.[14] The appointment of such a panel of judges bespeaks a design and a motive. It is of supreme importance that dramatic productions which are organised to decide a mutual clash or for a competition should be judged from all aspects of the histrionic art. Several experts on the different aspects would naturally form an ideal panel of judges, with the result that the final evaluation would be impartial, properly responsive and, at the same time, fully responsible.

Bharata's panel is of nine judges. The expert on sacrifice and on weapons were included by him to meet the obvious needs of the Sanskrit drama which drew largely on themes from mythology and royal life. But, their usefulness for judging religious practices and the handling of weapons during the performance could not be ignored. An expert on weapons is, moreover, specially trained in archery ; and his knowledge of perfect *stance* and *pose* is sure to come handy in judging the correctness and grace of poses and postures which the actors have necessarily to assume in playing their dramatic parts.

The usefulness of a king's officer on the panel may be likewise understood. He would be in the best position to judge the events, characters, the manner and propriety of speeches and addresses as affecting royal personages and the inmates of the harem. More important, perhaps, than this particular qualifications is his sense of decorum and dignity, the presence or absence of which he can detect in the movements, intonation and poses of the actors.

The courtesan has been included for the obvious purpose of judging the *abhinaya* of female roles and the presentation especially of erotic scenes, But by a courtesan we have to understand a girl like Vasantasenā, one who has fully imbibed the culture of high society and is herself accomplished in all the Fine Arts.

A *Citravid*, painter, would look to the costumes and stage-props and setting of the scenery ; a *Gāndharva*, musician,

would take care of the musical items in a performance. An actor of proven ability would be the best judge on the excellence or otherwise of the *abhinaya* rendered by the actors, generally.

The experts on prosody and language have been obviously included to evaluate the literary merit of a composition, as part of the total dramatic representation.

In suggesting a wide panel of such experts in their own fields Bharata undoubtedly evinces a compotent and comprehensive outlook and, at the same time, ensures a thorough judgement free from prejudice or bias.

The success of a dramatic production would utimately be decided by computing the *ghātas*, points of blemishes, and the *siddhis*, scoring points.[15] The actor or the troupe that scores more *siddhis* than incurs *ghātas* would naturally be the winner and the receipient of the *Patākā*. A careful recording of these points and their classification into mixed, total and partial categories has been, therefore, suggested by Bharata. A perfect success without a single blemish, as well as a total failure, are likely to be brought by a variety of factors. But the recording of good and bad points may be better based on the entire performance taken as a whole rather than on some portion of it only.[16] What Bharata implies by this prescription is that a judgement based on a piece picked up from the performance will be lopsided and as such incorrect.

[4]

The computation of the *ghātas*, therefore, demands a careful attention. The factors which range in the sphere of destiny and those which are ushered by accidents must not be counted against the performance. But blemishes which are man-made must never escape enlightened scrutiny. Among such blemishes the following deserve note according to Bharata :

(a) Running out of water from the *Nāḍikā*, which should be taken to mean the performance going beyond the prescribed time-schedule;

(b) The blemishes due to a *Naṭa*, that is to say, faulty

acting, intonation and movements, slipping of head-dress and such other errors brought by carelessness or loss of nerve;

(c) Errors in *Nāndī*, *Jarjarapūjā*, *Dhruvāgānas*, and in costumes, scenic arrangement, selection of actors for dramatic roles etc, all of which betray the responsibility of a Producer or Director of the drama;

(d) Errors in metres, grammar and words, which refer to the literary aspect of the composition presented in actual performance[17].

A final judgement of the judges is expected to take full cognisance of all these factors. The award of the Banner depends upon a balanced judgement. Were the judges to concur in their decision the choice of the winner will be unanimous However, if there were a differenc of opinion and two actors or troupes were found to be of equal merit, the judges were free to make such a recommendation to the king. The king then would make his own choice or award the Banner to both the competitors.[18] The recommendation of Bharata can be understood on the ancient background where the authority of the ruling king was absolute. But what it means in the present context is the provision for a Government-appointed expert to act as the final tribunal in case of serious controversy.

[5]

The details presented so far are theoretical, culled from the *Nāṭyaśāstra* and interpreted as reasonably as possible. Does the history of Sanskrit drama provide any illustration of dramatic competition and the rules of Bharata ? I think so.

The earliest instance that could be cited would be that of Bhāsa. "Bhāsa acquired fame," says Bāṇabhaṭṭa, "by his plays which opened with the *Sūtradhāra*, in which he played diverse roles, and which, like temples, received several Banners".[19] This tribute of Bāṇa to the ancient dramatist has puzzled all along commentators and Sanskrit scholars. I have endeavoured to show[20] that, properly interpreted, it means that

Bhāsa introduced a new technique of dramatic presentation, acted parts and directed plays; and was indeed the recipient of Banners on several occasions Here is then a tacit allusion to the dramatic competitions and the award of *Patākā*.

The *Vikramorvaśīya* of Kālidāsa contains a reference to a play composed by Sarasvatī and produced-directed by Bharatamuni. It was *Lakṣmisvayaṁvara.* Urvaśi was playing the role of Lakṣmī. At a certain part in the dialogue when she was to confess her love for Viṣṇu, Urvaśī, with her mind obsessed by her own private love for Purūravas, said the king's name instead of Viṣṇu's. Bharatamuni was so enraged at this error and deviation from the text that he cursed Urvaśī and banished her from the Heaven.[21] Urvaśī's error spoiled the dramatic performance. In the words of the *Nāṭyaśāstra* this is a *ghāta* which is self-made, perpetrated by the actor; and it proves how suicidal a mistake on the part of an actor can be in ruining a performance and his or her own standing as an artist !

The *Mālavikāgnimitra* records an actual rivalry between Gaṇadāsa and Haradatta, the two professors of dramatic art in the employ of king Agnimitra and his queen Dhāriṇī. Both are experts on theory; and so the relative superiority of one over the other is judged by their ability in training their pupils and in directing the dance performance. A neutral judge, Paṇḍita-Kauśikī, is appointed to review this dance-drama item presented by the pupils of both the professors. This incident is actually a part of Kalidāsa's dramatic plot; and we have here a play within the play as it were. What is very interesting in this connection is that the *judge selects the piece* to be presented, a particularly difficult musical composition by Śarmiṣṭhā, and it is to be sung, danced and acted. Further, the two participants are called upon *to present the same* identical composition. In the final result, the superior talent of Mālavikā wins the contest for her professor Gaṇadāsa.[22] This is a very clear illustration of the contest of dramatic art. The motive of rivalry, the king's intervention, the procedure for judging the relative merit of artists, are all in keeping with the rules of the *Nāṭyaśāstra*.

References

1. Cf. the *prastāvanās* of Harṣa's plays, Bhavabhūti's *Mālatīmadhava, Uttararāmacarita* etc.
2. The actual production of a play in *priyadarśikā*, *Garbhanāṭaka* in *Uttarāmacarita*, and the possibility of a special production of *Vikramorvaśiya* before a royal audience in view of the coronation scene in act v, envisage this assumption.
3. *Nāṭyaśāstra* (NS.), Gaekwad Oriental Series (GOS), Chapter 27.
4. NS. 27, verses 66a, 70, 71; also see vv. 76-77.

   संघर्षे तु समुत्पन्ने प्राश्निकान् संनिबोधत । 64a.
   शास्त्रप्रमाणनिर्माणै: व्यवहारो भवेत्तदा ।
   भर्तृनियोगादन्योऽन्यविग्रहात् स्पर्धयापि भरतानाम् ॥ 70 ॥
   अर्थपताकाहेतोः संघर्षो नाम संभवति ।
   तेषां कार्यं व्यवहारदर्शनं पक्षपातविरहेण ॥ 71 ॥

5. Cf. 27.2:

   सिद्धिस्तु द्विविधा ज्ञेया वाङ्मनोऽङ्गसमुद्भवा ।
   दैवी च मानुषी चैव नानाभावसमुत्थिता ॥

   See verses 2-17.
6. NS. 27.17:

   न शब्दो यत्र न क्षोभो न चोत्पातनिदर्शनम् ।
   संपूर्णता च रङ्गस्य दैवी सिद्धिस्तु सा स्मृता ॥

7. NS. 27-19:

   दैवात्मपरसमुत्थता त्रिविधा घाता बुधैस्तु विज्ञेया ।
   औत्पातिकश्चतुर्थः कदाचिदथ संभवत्येषु ॥

   See verses 19-37.
8. The interpolated verses 21 b-22 in GOS text have:

   वैवर्ण्यं चाचेष्टं विभ्रमितत्वं स्मृतिप्रमोहश्च ।

   The enumeration occurs further in v. 26, where we have,

   वैलक्षण्यं अचेष्टितं अविभूमिकत्वं स्मृतिप्रमोषश्च ।

   Abhinava explains : 'वैलक्षण्ये लक्षणविस्मरणम्, अन्यभूमिकोचितसत्त्वस्वीकारोऽपि विभूमिकः तूष्णीकता'

   (GOS, p. 313)

9. See vv. 20 ff :

मात्सर्याद् द्वेषाद्वा तत्पक्षत्वात् तथार्थभेदत्वाद् ।
एते तु परसमुत्था ज्ञेया घाता बुधैर्नित्यम् ॥

and the phrase 'अन्योन्यविग्रहात्' in v. 70.

10. See v. 24:

अतिहसितरुदितविस्फोटित-अन्यथोत्क्रुष्टनालिकापाताः ।
गोमयलोष्टपिपीलकविक्षेपाः चारिसंभूताः ।

Abhinava comments that 'throwing ants in intended to frighten a tender-hearted actor playing a female role'. Abhinava also mentions the attempt to don the disguise of a lion and thereby cause fright to the soft-natured actors or a panic among the spectators. (GOS, pp. 311, 313).

11. GOS, ch. 27 verses 73, 75, 76a. The recording of blemishes etc. is referred to in vv. 39, 40 also.

12. Abhinava writes (GOS). p. 319 : लेखको लिखति गणकः (v. 1. गमकः) पिण्डयति । द्वयोः अपि यथा एकस्य न घातः, तेन अयं अस्य अधिकारसिद्धिः ।'

13. vv. 73b-74.

14. vv. 64-68.

15. vv. 76-77:

घाता यस्य त्वल्पाः संख्याताः सिद्धयश्च बहुलाः स्युः ॥ 76b
विदितं कृत्वा राज्ञः तस्मै देया पताका हि ।
सिद्धयतिशयात् पताका समसिद्धौ पार्थिवाज्ञया ज्ञेया ॥ 77

16. GOS, NS. ch. 27. 75-76:

घाताश्च लक्षणीयाः प्रयोगतो नाट्ययोगे तु ।
दैवात् घातसमुत्थाः परोत्थिता वा बुधैर्न वै लेख्या. ॥ (न वै?)
घाता नाट्यसमुत्था ह्यात्मसमुत्थास्तु लेख्याः स्युः ।

17. vv. 26-47.

18. v. 78:

अथ नरपतिः समः स्यात् उभयोरपि सा तदा ज्ञेया ।
एवं विधिज्ञैः यष्टव्यो व्यवहारः समञ्जसाम् ॥

19. Bāṇa, *Harṣacarita* I. 15:
    सूत्रधारकृतारम्भैर्नाटकैर्बहुभूमिकैः ।
    सपताकैर्यशो लेभे भासो देवकुलैरिव ॥
20. See my paper, 'Bāṇa's Tribute to Bhāsa' AIOC, Bhubaneshwar, 1959; now included in my book, *Bhāsa Studies*, Maharashtra Granth Bhandar, Kolhapur, 1968.

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